

How Elections and Voting Impact Citizens

Why Vote? People always say it is your "*civic duty*" to vote. It is not an obligation in the United States to vote, so why is it so important?

If you vote, you have a say in your government. It is the reason our country came to be. In the 1700s, we were British citizens, yet we could not vote for Parliament members who passed laws that impacted our lives. Remember the American Revolution battle cry, "*no taxation without representation!*" The Founding Fathers wanted their voices to be heard regarding issues that affected them. That "voice" is your vote, and voting is a way to express your preferences for who will represent you or the policies that get passed.



Voting makes us equal. During elections, the act of voting is one of the few times when all adults in the U.S. have an equal say. All votes are equal in this country, no matter your race, gender, socio-economic status, or education.

Each vote sends a message. Even if the person or issue you vote for loses, your vote matters because it lets winners and losers know who supports their points of view.



Politicians notice who is and is not voting. In the U.S., the highest voter turnout is among seniors. So it is no surprise that politicians will spend much time on issues important to older people, like Social Security and Medicare. Younger voters typically have a lower voter turnout. Therefore, some of the issues important to young people are not always a top priority for politicians.

Whoever wins has the power to impact your life. We vote to be heard on issues that impact us at the local, state, and national levels. Here are a few examples:

The government makes important decisions that impact almost every aspect of your life, like...

Your school	such as what gets taught, how many kids are in your class
The environment	including how clean your air and water will be

Your health	including whether or not you and your family can get health insurance
Immigrations policies	such as who gets to visit, work and live in our country
Your safety	including how big your police and fire departments are
Providing for a common defense	by deciding how much money we spend on the military and whether we go to war

President Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “the future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter.” As you can see in the chart above, many things that affect your daily life are decided at the ballot box, so citizens should vote in all election cycles to maximize their voice in helping to shape their government’s decision making.