



Why It Is Important to Vote

Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote.

--George Jean Nathan (1882-1958)

It is easy to see that well over 100 years ago American citizens were promoting the importance of voting. The American way of life depends upon democracy and a basic principle of democracy is that every citizen is allowed to participate in how the country and the government are run. The primary way the citizens participate is by voting for elected officials. We probably forget that Americans fought long and hard to achieve independence from Great Britain over 200 years ago during the Revolutionary War. Meanwhile, today American soldiers are being wounded and dying to help people in other countries, like Iraq, achieve democracy and have a say in their government.

Many countries are ruled by a dictator like Saddam Hussein who is the only ruler and controls everything about the country. With a dictator people have no say in the laws and taxes in their country. People don't participate in the government in a Communist country either. In a Communist country the rulers control everything including housing, jobs and education.

Voting is the key to maintaining American freedoms and American society yet American people are ignoring their right and duty to vote. About 60% of the total registered voters voted in the 1960 Presidential Election, less than 40% in the 1996 election and about 63% in the historic 2008 election. In 1998 only about 20% of eligible voters who were 18 to 24 years-old voted while only about 50% of young people ages 18 to 29 voted in the 2008 Presidential Election. Not enough eligible voters are participating in our democracy and even fewer young people are taking the time to vote.

Elected officials make important life and death decisions about what happens in the United States. Leaders decide about death when they enact legislation about ethical medical treatments and sending soldiers to war. Leaders decide about life when they consider abortion. They legislate the quality of your life, for example, when they set the tax rate or how Social Security operates in old age. It's up to everyone to select the best possible leaders by learning about candidates and going out to vote. It's important.