

Why is it important to vote?

“The 15th Amendment to the Constitution granted African American men the right to vote by declaring that the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” African Americans now had a chance to participate in the country’s decisions and help bring about economic change by voting. When we exercise our right to vote, we demonstrate our appreciation for the opportunity to directly impact our own destiny as a nation.

Voting is crucial to all African Americans because *three* amendments had to have been passed before they were permitted to vote in the United States. Several practices prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote. They were forced to take literacy tests, and if they made an attempt at voting, they were told they got the time, date, and polling place wrong. Many Black voters are more concerned with their race and survival rather than political issues, and for this reason, they chose not to vote on Election Day. In fact, a recent report estimated that around 6.5 million African Americans nationwide will not show up to vote. If Blacks came to the polls to vote, their voting alliance would become that much more powerful. Together, African Americans make up a rising population, and yet still do not vote, so their concerns are unheard. Thousands of African Americans

were imprisoned for nonviolent crimes that they were not even remotely involved in. Because of this, Black people have felt that their votes were not important, therefore, all the more reason for them to simply cast their vote. African Americans soon learned it was important to vote, so in 1964, Black voter turnout increased from only six percent to about 59 percent in 1969. In 2012, for the first time in history, African American voters outnumbered white voters. Over 66 percent of these people who were registered decided to go to the polls in November. The issues that were brought out affected African Americans' lives and showed that their vote meant just as much as white people's do. In order to eliminate the issue that Black votes do not matter, African Americans must vote. This exact idea came to mind when President George W. Bush won the re-election by increasing the percentage of the Black vote in the key states of Ohio and Florida. By doing this, Bush won about twelve percent of the Black vote nationally. African Americans played an important role in Bush's re-election. Likewise, if Republicans capture 25 percent of Black votes, Democrats will lose the White House for a generation. It will take a joint effort to convince many African Americans to vote for a certain party, which is why Democrats suffered so much and needed 90 percent of the Black vote. When Barack Obama received more than 90 percent of the Black vote in the 2012 presidential election, one political party anticipated that all African

Americans would vote for them. The other party believed that they did not need the support of the Black vote in order to win the election.

The subject of voting illustrates many significant opportunities for America, especially for all African Americans. Voting is not just a constitutional right, but rather a privilege. By voting, Americans make their voices heard as well as speak their minds. This is important to African Americans because they want to be able to have a part in the voting process by making their voices heard. Not only is voting a singular privilege, but it is also a responsibility. When they vote, Americans must research a specific ballot, the running candidates, and social issues. Expressed on a ballot or in words, voting gives citizens the opportunity to choose from a variety of issues and courses of action. Because representatives need our approval in order to stay in office, it is very important for voters to decide who they want to represent them in government. This includes the president, governor, national representatives, state legislators, and local officials. Along with government representatives, it is also crucial to register your opinions on how the government should be operated. What you do in your voting booth can change not only the course of government, but also the direction of the community, state, and nation.

Every vote matters. *Every vote matters.* Many American citizens do not believe this to be true, thinking that they do not know nearly enough about the issues, but it is. Because many Americans are not voting, the country's voting percentage is decreasing dramatically. In fact, according to recent polls, less than 60 percent of these Americans actually voted on Election Day. This meant people have not yet realized the importance of voting and the collective influence it can have on our country. Although some people think that others will vote anyway, it does not, and will never, mean that you should not vote. One vote could not only decide who will win the election, but also what ballot items will pass within a community.

For example, a few years ago in the town of Candia, residents voted on certain issues, such as full-day kindergarten and funding for sports programs. At one particular point, results indicated that there was only one more person who voted for full-day kindergarten than those who voted against. This means that one person who voted 'yes' decided whether our school would have full-day kindergarten. If this one person had not voted, the turnout could have been a tie, or

gone in the reverse direction. Whether big election or small community, it is imperative to cast your vote, because *you* could determine who or what will win.

Because everyone's future depends on it, it is vital for people to have dreams. Likewise, when you vote, you do not just vote for representatives; you vote for your future and the future of others. This applies to all African Americans and their voting rights. Elections have a significant impact on life in the United States, such as determining ballot outcomes and deciding our leader for the next four years. Most local elections affect our daily lives because they decide who runs local councils, which can control, for example, housing, libraries, recycling, and transportation. Voting is one of the most important ways to protect your children's future. They may not be old enough to vote, but they still look up to you. A parent's example has influenced many children to participate at the polls. Older family members may be interested in voting for the first time if you cast your vote, which creates a notable influence on their lives.

It is essential to always vote in regard to our nation and honor its history. Voting is the key to a successful country, and I believe all American citizens should contribute to this fateful triumph. Voting is one of the main components of

a democratic government and, most importantly, here in the United States. In the 2016 presidential election, CNN reported that 126 million eligible voters exercised their civil right to vote. That means only 55 percent of voting age citizens cast ballots. Therefore, 45 percent of Americans decided that their vote was not important in the election. Do you think the election would have turned out differently if they thought their vote mattered? I know I do!