

WHY VOTE???

A Gift and a Duty

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WE'RE THE LARGEST GENERATION

**CAN YOU
HEAR US
NOW?**



**#YOUTHAREUNSTOPPABLE
#THELARGESTGENERATION**

Register at VOTE411.org

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Learn why **VOTING** is a powerful way to respond to these challenging times and **Make Government Work for YOU!**

The League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh is a nonprofit 501 (C)(3) organization and is nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties.



Our world has been tilted for over a year now and our lives have been changed in so many ways that it is hard to remember what normal was like. We have been asked to meet the challenges of this global pandemic and have witnessed a significant rise in political division and civil unrest.

We may be getting back to normal, but **ALL OF US** have been affected by the pandemic and *maybe it made us think differently about the role of other people in our lives.* Perhaps this past year has made us look at our communities in a new way and realize how much we depend on each other day-to-day.

We like to think of ourselves as **independent**, but what do we lose if we **only** see ourselves as on our own? Think about how government affects every area of our lives and what you think the role of government *should be*. ***What would our communities be like without government services?*** The public school system? Paved roads? Public transportation? Support services? Access to health care? Government support for scientific and medical research?

When we vote—at **every level (Local, State, Federal)**— we answer these questions about the kind of communities we want and how to pay for them through our taxes.

Voting is the way we shape our communities together.

We know this isn't easy.

*Our goal is to show you a way through some of the challenges. Through the **POWER** of your vote, you can have a say in the future of our country.*

YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE!

To Vote or Not to Vote

*That Is the
Question!*



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“To Vote or Not to Vote”

Voting is how a **citizen participates in a democracy**. Unlike places like Australia and many South American countries where voting is a law enforced by fines, you are in no way required to vote--

Your Vote is your VOICE... and your CHOICE.

Why do young people (and others) choose NOT to vote? (Hint: it's NOT because they don't care.)

- Don't know the issues
- Don't know the candidates
- Voting is so complicated!
- Inconvenient time/day of week
- Hectic time in the citizen's life make it difficult
- Feel vote doesn't matter
- Do not trust the democratic process

Why do young people (and others) choose TO vote?

- Their RIGHT as citizens
- Choose to be ACTIVE in democracy
- Have their voices HEARD
- Have their ISSUES addressed
- Because their PARENTS/OTHER PEOPLE in their lives did

What can happen if you CHOOSE NOT to exercise your RIGHT to VOTE?

- May result in a **winner you least agree with**.
- Winners may **disregard or not seek the opinions** of citizens who do not vote, so...
- No say in how the **government is run** or what the **direction of the country** will be.



Voting is the GIFT: If you are 18-years-old, click [here](#) to register to vote.

- *It is a gift just for being born in the United States and for turning 18.*
- *It is a gift for someone who was not born here but who has completed the very long path of becoming a naturalized citizen.*
- *(ONLY US CITIZENS can vote in our elections, despite what you might hear from various sources.)*
- *It is a gift even if you are a citizen who has NEVER voted...but may do so NOW.*

We want you to know that no one can take away this gift; it is yours throughout your life.

- *In Pennsylvania, even people who are convicted of a felony have their right to vote restored once their "feet hit the street".*

We don't talk about this enough:

Voting is ALSO a CIVIC DUTY. Just like Jury Duty— where citizens are called to serve on a jury that fairly represents the community--**voting is a CIVIC DUTY, too.**

So, CONGRATULATIONS! If you are a young person turning 18, or a citizen of ANY age, you have a **GIFT AND A DUTY** and the chance to join with all who want to have a say in the future of our nation, as active, informed citizens.

**We are
Citizens!**

**What does
that mean?**



No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.

Kofi Annan

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*As a citizen of the United States, there are no age, gender, race, intellectual, educational, economic, social, sexual orientation barriers to this title.
You are a citizen!*

You NEVER own your citizenship MORE than when you participate in our democracy by VOTING.

We are the “We” in “We the People”. ALL OF US.

Democracy!

Principles of our Constitutional Democracy

- Ensuring free and fair elections
- Active participation of informed citizens
- Protecting the human rights of all citizens
- Applying the Rule of Law equally to all citizens

How Do We Balance Personal Freedoms with the Good of All?

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These Founding Principles are great, right?

Rule of law-- means the laws and regulations ALL citizens must follow.

Not only are we **citizens**, but we also are citizens **WITHIN a Democracy**.

Young people turning 18 may have a feeling of independence.
Americans are known for their independence and self-reliance.

How do these American qualities of INDEPENDENCE fit with the principles of a Constitution where everyone gives up a little of their FREEDOM for the GOOD of the MANY?

Here's an example of how we balance individual rights with the common good.

Driving a Car:

Before people get behind the wheel of a car, they must be a certain age, pass a driving test, and get a license (laws). Every time they drive, they must follow the "rules of the road" (more laws): obey speed limits, obey signs like "Stop" and "Yield", allow people to cross the road in crosswalks, fasten seatbelts. In some states, texting while driving is not allowed.

What would happen if people felt free to **ignore** the driving laws? The result might be gridlock, traffic jams, and accidents with possible harm to the driver and to others.

We are FREE to go where we want to go, IF we follow the rules of the road.

In a healthy democracy, We the People benefit from the Constitutional Principles of our Democracy as we BALANCE our individual freedoms with the good of us all.

Why Should YOU PARTICIPATE in this Democracy?

Voting is Essential in a Democracy

Our government
affects many parts of
our lives from schools
and careers to health
care to the environment

Voting is an important
right in our society

By voting, **you make
your voice heard** on
how you think your
government should
operate



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“Voting is Essential in a Democracy”.

YOU MATTER. YOUR VOTE MATTERS. YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

FACT: Government Elected Officials make the decisions that affect our lives. You have the **POWER** to **CHOOSE** who **WORKS FOR YOU**. Remember, the candidate you vote for may not win, but **YOU** are the winner when you take part in our democracy.

Here are the MOST important things to remember:

- ✓ **Voting makes your voice heard in a way that effects real change--by resulting in the policies and laws that affect us all.**
- ✓ **Voting is something only YOU can control. Take hold of the POWER of your vote.**
- ✓ **Make your vote an INFORMED vote—learn about the candidates and issues before you vote. Our democracy depends on the PARTICIPATION of ALL its INFORMED citizens.**

As an ACTIVE and INFORMED CITIZEN...

**Register to vote NOW at vote.pa.gov and [Make a Plan](#)
to Vote in EVERY Election!**

INFOGRAPHICS

JQ CITIZEN and CLOSED PRIMARY ELECTIONS in PA

Now that I REGISTERED TO VOTE, tell me WHEN I need to vote!

There are TWO ELECTIONS EVERY YEAR: A CLOSED PRIMARY ELECTION in the spring (May 18, 2021), and a GENERAL ELECTION in the fall (November 2, 2021).

What is a CLOSED Primary Election in Pennsylvania?

THE CLOSED PRIMARY ELECTION is when members of ONLY the TWO MAJOR political parties--REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRATIC--choose their CANDIDATES for the GENERAL ELECTION.

When I registered to vote, I saw the Democratic, Republican, Green, and Libertarian parties on my application. Where was the INDEPENDENT party?

There is no "INDEPENDENT" party in Pennsylvania, but candidates in the Libertarian and Green parties can run for office in the GENERAL Election. (ANY registered voter CAN VOTE for ANY candidate of ANY party in the General Election.)

I also remember that when I registered to vote, I could have CHOSEN to JOIN the Republican or Democratic Party.

Yes. When you REGISTERED TO VOTE,* in order to vote in a Closed Primary Election, you had to CHOOSE either the DEMOCRATIC or REPUBLICAN PARTY. PA Primary Elections are CLOSED to voters who haven't picked a party or who chose a "third" party.

So, if I don't join one of the two major parties, I CAN'T VOTE in the PA CLOSED PRIMARY ELECTION?? That's right, except...

Those voters who are NOT registered as Democratic or Republican MAY VOTE in a PA Primary Election ONLY IF there is a ballot question, constitutional amendment or special election.

***IMPORTANT!!** At any time, you can add or change your "party affiliation" by going to [VotesPA.com](https://www.VotesPA.com). If you choose either the Democratic or Republican party, then on PRIMARY ELECTION DAY when you go to your polling place, you will receive a ballot that has candidates only from the party you chose--Republican or Democratic.

WHY VOTE IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS?
Local and Municipal Elections Affect you the MOST!

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
Are held in ODD YEARS--these are the elected officials who SET PROPERTY TAX RATES and MAKE SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES.
Municipal Elections affect you the most!

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
Include Local, City, and County Officials who make LAWS and REGULATIONS that affect your own township, city, and county.
Municipal Elections affect you the most!

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
Include MAYORS, CHIEFS OF POLICE, city council members, district attorneys, sheriffs, SCHOOL BOARDS, magistrates, and JUDGES.
Municipal Elections affect you the most!

2 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
Involve a CLOSED PRIMARY ELECTION in the spring and a GENERAL ELECTION in the fall--AND ONLY 20% and 40% of eligible voters TURN OUT!
Municipal Elections affect you the most!

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
VOTE if you care about your TAXES!
VOTE if you care about your SCHOOLS and JUDGES!
VOTE if you care about your ROADS, WATER, and AIR!
Municipal Elections affect you the most!

SO IF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AFFECT CITIZENS THE MOST, WHY DON'T MORE PEOPLE VOTE?
Maybe They Don't Know HOW Municipal Elections Affect Their Lives!
YOUR VOTE can affect Municipal Elections the most!

© 2021 League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh **EVERY Election Counts. YOU Count. VOTE!**

Two important infographics:

Closed Primary Elections-- the Primary is a Party election for members of the major parties-- Democratic or Republican-- designed to allow Party members to select who they want to run for their Party in the General Election. It is *closed* to non-party members and independent voters.

However, all voters who belong to any political party—including Green and Libertarian--or even those who don't belong to a party, MAY VOTE in ANY election if there are ballot questions, constitutional amendments or if it is a special election.

*You may remember...EVERY registered voter in Pennsylvania **could vote** in this year's MAY 18th PRIMARY Election FOR or AGAINST PA Constitutional Amendments and any other **statewide or local** Ballot Questions which were added to the Primary Election ballot.*

✓ **CLICK [here](https://www.lwvpgh.org/docs.ashx?id=734142) to view or download "Closed Primary Elections".**
To SHARE, please COPY this direct link: www.lwvpgh.org/docs.ashx?id=734142

In Municipal Elections any registered voter can vote for any candidate in any party. You have the chance to vote in the next **Municipal Election on November 2, 2021**, if you belong to a major or minor political party or even if you don't belong to any political party at all. These local elections are the most important as the officials who will be elected will set local tax rates, create school board policies, make the local laws and enforce them.

✓ **CLICK [here](https://www.lwvpgh.org/docs.ashx?id=733743) to view or download "Municipal Elections".**
To SHARE, please COPY this direct link: www.lwvpgh.org/docs.ashx?id=733743



vote.pa.gov: [here](#)

- One-stop shop where you can register to vote, change your address, your party affiliation, or find your registration status, find your polling place, and more.

Vote411.org: [here](#)

- At this *League of Women Voters* website, a few weeks before every election, type in your address and view the candidates who will be on your ballot, and more. If candidates have answered three questions, you will be able to compare their answers side-by-side. You can also **create your own personalized ballot list**, and more.

League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh: lwvpgh.org

- For the most current, nonpartisan election, voting, and government information.
- Find other [Tutorials](#) and **unique infographics** in the [Voter Resource Library](#).

Still have questions? Please contact us at: civic.education@lwvpgh.org

BECOME A SUPER-VOTER AND VOTE IN EVERY ELECTION
“Democracy is NOT a spectator sport!”