

Why Should I Vote?



Many people today are disenchanted with the democratic process and stay home on Election Day. They believe that their vote makes no difference and they can't possibly have an impact on the electoral process. But, one vote makes a difference...

THE ARITHMETIC OF VOTING

How important is a single vote? To make the math easy, let's talk about 100 people being eligible to decide an issue.

100 people are eligible to vote. If ALL register AND vote, then 51 votes decide the election. If only 60 people register to vote (even though 100 people are eligible) AND ALL 60 vote, 31 votes win the election.

If 60 people register to vote, but only 30 of them (50%) vote... then it takes only 16 votes to win the election.

This is essentially what happened in the 1994 Congressional elections. Many local elections were close. Because many people did not vote, a small group of active voters controlled the outcome.

When you choose NOT to vote, you give more clout to every vote that is recorded.

ONE VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

- In 2010, Al Franken became the senator from Minnesota by just 312 votes statewide. That averaged to one extra vote for Al from each of Minnesota's polling places!
- In 1985, Jim Chapman won the first U.S. Congressional seat in Texas by fewer than 5 votes per precinct.
- In 1978, Marc Garcia won a seat in the California State Senate by 90 votes.
- In 1974, Jerry Brown won the race for California governor by a margin of fewer than 8 votes per precinct.
- In 1968, Hubert Humphrey lost the presidential race to Richard Nixon by a margin of fewer than 3 votes per precinct.
- In 1960, Richard Nixon lost the presidential election and John Kennedy won by a margin of less than 1 vote per precinct.

AND LOOK AT THESE LOCAL ELECTIONS

- In April 1996, in the 17th Aldermanic District in Milwaukee, Willie Hines won by 14 votes.
- In Mequon in 1986, a coin toss decided the winner of a tie vote between Daniel Abendrott and Carol Hoit for alderman. One absentee ballot, which would have decided the race, was rejected because it was improperly witnessed.

Above from the LWV of Milwaukee County - thank you! <http://lwvmilwaukee.org/WhyShouldIVote.html>

Voting rights in NJ

You have the right to vote on Election Day if . . .

- You have registered to vote at least 21 days before Election Day. There is no fee or cost for registering to vote. **Note:** *You have the right to register at the address considered your primary address. If you are a college student, it can be a dorm, off-campus address, or a home address. If you are homeless, it can be a shelter, park, or any place you usually stay.*
- You meet the legal requirements to register to vote.

You can register to vote if . . .

- You are a U.S. citizen, you will be at least 18 years old on Election Day, and have been a resident of a New Jersey county for at least 30 days before the election.
- A court has not specifically determined that you lack the mental capacity to understand the act of voting. **Note:** *Someone who has been assigned a legal guardian or placed in a psychiatric hospital can still exercise the right to vote unless it has specifically been revoked.*
- You are not in prison, on probation or on parole for a felony conviction. **Note:** *If you're serving time for a misdemeanor or civil matter you can still vote. You have the right to register and to vote from jail using a mail-in ballot. If you lost your voting rights for a felony conviction, your right to vote is restored once you complete your sentence, parole and probation. You must re-register to vote, even if you were registered before your conviction.*

NJ Voters' Bill of Rights on Election Day

- To vote without intimidation, threats, coercion, or interference.
- To bring your children into the voting booth with you.
- To file a signed or anonymous written complaint at your polling place or by mail, telephone, or online if you are dissatisfied with the way the election is being run.
- To bring someone of your choice into the voting booth to assist you with voting if you cannot read or write English or have a disability. You can also request special assistance from the poll worker.
- To vote by an emergency paper ballot if the machines are malfunctioning. Emergency ballots are counted automatically.
- To be given a provisional ballot if you are not allowed to vote on a machine or by emergency ballot. The ballot should have written instructions, including how to find out if it was counted. Your eligibility to vote must be verified by the county before your provisional ballot is counted.
- To vote under your original name if you have changed your name since registering to vote.
- To ask for assistance from a poll worker.

Voting Problems at the Polls

If your polling location is not open when you arrive, call our hotline at 1-800-792-VOTE (8683) or the Division of Elections at 1-877-NJVOTER to alert officials of the problem. Polls are open 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. If your right to vote is challenged by an official challenger, ask the poll worker for an affidavit, which you will sign to confirm your identity or address. The worker will allow you to vote either on the machine or by a provisional ballot.

Above material courtesy of the ACLU NJ <https://www.aclu-nj.org/theissues/electionsvoting/know-your-voting-rights/>