

Why Vote?



Pre-reading

Questions:

- Do you feel it's important to vote? Why or why not?

Definitions:

- Govern – to rule or lead
- Representative – a person who speaks or acts for a group or community
- Elected – chosen by means of voting
- Candidate – a person who is trying to get elected

Reading

19 Is there something you would like to change in your community? Voting is one of the ways you can
37 make those changes. Your vote is your voice in the governing leadership of your country, state, county, and
52 city. Elections affect who represents you in government. You have representatives in national, state and
54 local government.

54 The U.S. President, Vice-President, and elected members of the U.S. Senate and House of
69 Representatives govern our country. Your State Governor and elected members of the State Senate and
84 House of Representatives govern your state. Elected county board members provide leadership in your
98 county. A mayor and city council members are elected to represent you on city issues.

113 Your vote is also your voice at your local public school. School board members are elected by your
131 vote. If you have concerns about school issues, read about the school board candidates in your local
148 newspaper before the election. Vote for those you feel would make a difference on issues you are
165 concerned about.

167 Elections affect how public money gets spent. In 2002 Marshall, MN residents voted yes to a raise in
185 their property taxes for local public school improvements. Elections affect what laws are passed. In 1996,
201 residents of the state of California voted to legalize the use of marijuana for medical purposes.

220 The right to an equal vote for every citizen is one of the basic values of the United States. We're not all
242 rich, or beautiful, or friends of the mayor. But we each have one vote. Many people, however, choose not
261 to use their voting power. Less than 50% of Americans vote in most elections.

275 Why do some people choose to vote and others do not? Reasons to vote may include: to make a
294 change, to support a candidate, it is our right, to have a say. Reasons not to vote may include: not a citizen,
316 do not know how, do not understand the ballot, and do not think it makes a difference.

333 If you do not know how to vote or do not understand the ballot, help is available. You can ask a
354 teacher, job counselor or city clerk for help with how to vote. At your polling place, you can ask for help to
376 read and mark the ballot. If you make a mistake on the ballot, you can get a new one.

395 History tells us that every vote does count. In 1845 one vote brought Texas into the Union. In 1960
414 one vote per precinct elected John F. Kennedy President. In 1977 the mayor of Ann Arbor, Michigan (a city
432 of over 100,000 people) was elected by one vote.

441 Over the past 100 years, women, people of color, and 18 – 21 year olds have all won the right to vote.
463 Any adult citizen who is not in prison or on parole for a felony can vote. **Exercise** your right to vote! Let
485 your voice be heard!

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