

Editorial: Don't waste your citizenship—vote

August 31, 2016

Talking Texans into voting in political elections is a semi-tough sell.

On one hand, most of us are civic-minded folks, and we like to do our duty. But on the other hand, we already know who's going to win around here.



Marv Knox We are a red state. The reddest of the red. Republican of the Republicans.

The last time Texas voted for a Democratic presidential candidate was 1976, when Jimmy Carter claimed the Lone Star State's electoral votes. Just think; you could be a late-middle-aged Texas Democrat and never voted for a candidate who won Texas.

And the last time a Democrat won a statewide office was 1994, when Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock, Attorney General Dan Morales and Comptroller John Sharp all won.

[According to Politifact](#), Texas owns the nation's longest statewide Republican winning streak.

So, why bother? If we already know how the voting is going to turn out—Republicans will win all the statewide offices, and Texas won't play a role in electing the next president—why get up and go vote?

Several reasons, actually:

- **Christian duty.**

Jesus said his followers should fulfill all the duties of citizenship. When asked about paying taxes, Jesus said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17).

Along with paying taxes and serving on jury duty, voting is one of the duties of citizenship required of all Texans and Americans. According to Jesus, we should be exemplary citizens, and that means voting.

- **Democracy matters.**

Voting in free elections is a vital aspect of American heritage. It’s helped make this country strong for 240 years. One way to help prop up that strength is to stay engaged in the political process.

Americans will undermine their freedom if they grow apathetic and decide voting doesn’t matter. In fact, we’ve already undermined it to a significant degree by failing to turn out to vote in primaries, often turning them over to the extremists of both parties. This is why we often feel we face such lousy choices in the general elections.

- **Elections are broad.**

We hear all about presidential candidates, and in selected years, candidates for governor and Senate dominate the media and get our attention. But in every election, we vote for all kinds of local officials, from council members, to school boards, to sheriffs and judges.

Casting informed votes in all these elections is a challenge. Some local newspapers and television stations provide strong pre-election coverage, but even then, you’ve got to pay attention. That said, these elected officials often shape the quality of our daily lives as much or more than the big-

ticket politicians. If you skip an election because you don't think your presidential vote counts, you silence your voice for everything.

- **Conscience counts.**

When you vote in political elections and cast your ballot for state and local referenda, you exercise your conscience. Even when you think you're going to win or know you're going to lose, it's a vital part of both being human and living a faithful Christian life.

And that raises an important point. On any given Sunday, many faithful Christians sit on the same pews as other faithful Christians whose votes they cancel. Both vote the way they do because of how they hear God and understand Scripture. Rationally, we might think they can't both be correct, but they both can be faithful. And faithful always is correct.

- **You never know.**

All streaks eventually come to an end, so you never know when a vote you thought you "wasted" actually makes a difference. This could be true in 2016, when both presidential candidates seem to be chugging uphill and more states' electoral college votes are at play than have been available in many years. That scenario should offer cautionary advice to Texas Republicans and hope to Texas Democrats. Your vote might matter now more than it has in many years—maybe your entire lifetime.

One final word: Why talk about voting in early September rather than mid-October, much nearer to Election Day? Good question. If you're not already registered to vote and you don't register on time, you won't get to vote. Election Day is Nov. 8, and the last day to register is Oct. 11. To register, or to find out more about voting this year, visit the [VoteTexas.Gov website](http://VoteTexas.Gov).

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