



Non-partisan Information on Registration and Voting

Written for Parents by the *Parents as Leaders Team of Circle of Parents™*

Why Vote?

You want to have some say about your neighborhood? The schools your kids go to? The help you get from programs in your community? You can have your say about all these important parts of your life by **VOTING**. Together we have power to change our communities. As a registered voting member of your community, the politician in office will listen to you. You have something other people in your community do not bother to use, political **POWER**. Politicians pay attention to those who can elect them. Tell them you voted in the last election and you care about your community. Plus your children will learn how important voting is by seeing that it is important to you.

A Parent's Story of Voting

"I have usually voted when there is a presidential nomination but other than that, politics are not my favorite event. I vote because you're supposed to as a citizen of the United States of America. I would not know some of the candidates or what they stood for until I got to the voting booth. My participation was not very fulfilling as I felt uninformed but I still wanted to do my part. On a more personal level, I wanted to know how ordinary people impact our senators and representatives who vote on laws that change our everyday lives locally. I took a class on legislative activity and learned how I can impact the decisions of our elected officials. We visited the state house and actually went through passing a mock bill through the legislation. We met representatives and I found them to be ordinary people like me that had the time to dedicate to the task of making our lives better. We vote these people into office; I found that their opinions could be impacted by my opinion. If they aren't told what we want or feel, then how can they make decisions for us when it's time to vote.

"After a few years, I found an opportunity to use my newly found tools for a law that would impact my life directly. Our state's governor proposed a new health plan that would increase coverage for low-income families and small businesses. I testified in front of the committee formed to hear public testimony about the new health plan. If I could impact the decision to raise the income-level guidelines, my children and I would directly benefit. I wrote and e-mailed my representatives when I felt that the issue was being put on the back burner. I am hopeful that my story impacted at least one senator's or one representative's vote that day." *Sincerely, Mary Kerwood, a parent leader from Maine*

Registering to vote is easy to do in most states. You need to get a form, fill it out, and mail, walk, drive or take public transportation to your city, town or county clerk's office. Do you visit any of these state or county offices; the Registry of Motor Vehicles, WIC programs, AFDC offices, Mental Health office, Rehabilitation programs, the library? You can register there too. Each state is a little different so to be sure you can call the office of the Secretary General in your state or Vote Smart 1-888-868-3762 M-F 7 A.M.--5 P.M. Mountain Time. If you call you can find the nearest place to register. Two web sites which have helpful information about candidates are: Project Vote Smart at www.vote-smart.org or the League of Women Voters at www.lwv.org.

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