

Janet Kramer LWVBC Essay Contest 2023
Second Place, High School Category

Meaningful Voters > Quantity of Votes
By Londyn Koester

After the United States declared independence from England, the founders emphasized on creating a democratic government that allowed citizens to vote for their representative. Although the voting was limited to a small, specific group of citizens, this was still a start to creating our government today. As years passed, there have been multiple stepping stones that allowed more of the United States population to gain voting rights. Some of the most important advancements were through the 15th and 19th Amendments which allowed African American and women citizens to vote. With this privilege that many past activists fought for the right to participate in, many people do not utilize this opportunity. While low voter turnout is still a significant issue, making voting mandatory is not the most logical way to combat the problem. Mandatory voting will create an abundance of uninformed voters and increase the amount of bribery during campaigns and at polls. On top of that, making a systematic way to enforce the voting will be very difficult and place more pressure on law enforcement.

According to the United States Census, 70% of citizens of voting age registered to vote, while only 61% of citizens actually voted (Day & File, 2020). With such a low number of participating voters, the remaining population will be forced to vote. This means that if voting were to become mandatory, at least 30% of the voters would have to vote unwillingly. This is a larger percentage of the population and can change the numbers in the election greatly. With this population, it is likely that many voters are not properly educated with the information about candidates. If they are unwilling to vote in the first place, they are most likely unwilling to research and inform themselves about the election. Uninformed voters will skew the polls of the population and could negatively alter the results of the election. While the country needs to increase the number of voters, the knowledge of voters is more important than the quantity of voters. On top of that, if people are voting because they are forced to, this also makes the population more easily persuaded.

Compulsory voting will create a more informal and unjust election between candidates. While money is a large portion of campaigning, mandatory voting will increase the advantages of money. Those with more money would have more persuasion to the group of citizens who chose not to vote before the mandatory voting law. With citizens who are unwilling and careless about voting during the election, candidates and political parties can easily bribe the citizens to vote their way. A citizen who arrives at their voting location without any previous knowledge about the candidates would be willing to change their vote without excessive persuasion. Members of a certain party could wait outside of voting areas and easily bribe the carefree citizen who is forced to vote by law. Voting should be based on the characteristics and plans of the candidate, rather than the amount of money or bribes the candidates can offer the voters. The increase in bribery and unfair actions will create a more corrupt government and completely change the morals of the election.

If voting were to be made mandatory, the government would have to produce a system that enforced the law. While the voting is compulsory, there are still going to be a group of citizens that do not comply with the new law. In order to enforce it, the government would have to create some form of punishment or fine for those who do not cooperate. This can be difficult to provide a consistent and reliable system without having to overwork the law enforcement. With other extreme crimes being committed, adding more for law enforcement to handle would create a busier and more difficult job for them. The unnecessary, extra work increases their workload while also taking away from the time worked on other important tasks.

Instead of making voting mandatory, there are other factors that could contribute to a higher voting turnout. In the process of registering to vote, citizens are required to have a government issued ID. This can make it difficult for low income citizens to register. In order to prevent socioeconomic status from playing a role in voter registration, the government can provide extra assistance for those citizens to ensure that their voices are heard during the election. This can increase voter turnout while also creating a more equal voting process. There are also other inconvenient factors that play into the role of low voter turnout. Since the presidential election day takes place on a Tuesday, many people are unable to vote due to work or school schedules. Creating multiple options for voting days can increase the chances of people voting. With multiple days as options there will be a longer time period to vote while also allowing people to choose the time that works best for them. Also, registering to vote has to occur before the election day. If same day registration was made an option, voting would be more convenient and easier for the citizens to vote. This can create more of an incentive to vote if the voters don't have to go through the time consuming processes. So, instead of making voting mandatory for everyone, there can be other ways to make voting more convenient without forcing people to vote.

Although voting is a privilege that the United States has worked hard to practice, many citizens do not choose to vote. While this is an issue in our country, there are different actions that could decrease the number of eligible voters who vote. Creating mandatory voting will increase the number of uninformed voters as well as increase the corruptness throughout the election process. Compulsory voting also adds more work and stress onto law enforcement by creating another issue they need to cover. So, mandatory voting would increase the quantity of overall voters, but decrease the accuracy and fairness of the voting system the founders have created for the United States.

Bibliography

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