

Citizen Engagement Corner

Brookline Voters Missing at the Polls

League of Women Voters of Brookline

Your Mission This Month? Find these people and get them to the polls in November.

People say democracy is a participatory sport – and in the United States, voting in elections is as participatory as it gets. So why do so few people vote?

Some statistics. Census data as of July 2017 puts us as a town of 59,157. Of that, 82% or approximately 48,500 are over 18. Of those of us who are residents and over 18, only citizens may vote. According to the Town Clerk, in 2018, there are 36,662 registered voters (including 12,000 inactives). That said, only 8,124 voted in May's Town election. Due to active campaigning in some contested elections, 10,861 voted in the September 4th primary. But we can't have more voters than we have people registered to vote! We have considerable room for improvement. Shall we aim for greater participation in November?

Anecdotal evidence says voting takes too much time – we're busy, we're working, we're raising kids ... we don't have time to figure out what is important or to stand in line at the polls. And, frankly, we don't believe our votes make a difference. But they do!

Advocates were beaten, jailed and killed so we could vote. We have fought two wars over the right to determine our futures, and the drafters of our Constitution believed having a say in our government was critical to self-determination. Now that we have it, should we really be taking the right to vote for granted?

Of course not. The League of Women Voters was formed in the 1920s from the woman's suffrage movement with the intent to educate and inform women (20 million of them) who had just won the right to vote. Today we are a grass roots non-partisan organization dedicated to providing everyone with information you need to vote.

The League of Women Voters of Brookline (www.lwvbrookline.org) provides basic information on how/where/when to register to vote; an annual Voters Guide with information provided by candidates for local office on themselves and their positions; candidates nights; forums on local, state and national issues presented in a non-partisan format; and discussion of issues in the biweekly *Engaged Citizen Corner* written by the LWVB. The League of Women Voters of MA (www.lwvma.org) provides information on voting and elections and legislative action priorities. The League of Women Voters of the US (www.lwv.org) has information on voting rights, elections and other issues.

So, are you going to get more engaged, starting with the November election for state and federal offices in MA? Please ask your family, your neighbors and the people you see daily – in person, through social media, by phone, or whatever means that works - if they have registered to vote. Urge them to become informed about candidates and the issues, and tell them how. Offer them a ride to the polls if needed. Be a part of the solution – democracy is not a spectator sport!

Prepared and submitted by a member of the League of Women Voters of Brookline (LWVB). The League is a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy.