

On January 20th, 2021, then-President-elect Joe Biden and then-VP-elect Kamala Harris were sworn in as the President and Vice President of the United States respectively. There's no denying that this annual inauguration specifically was vastly different from the rest. This past election, the one that decided who would be our President and Vice President, had the highest number of voters than in any other past election. It also took place in the middle of a global pandemic that disrupted everyone's lives in a whole new way.

While it is normal for presidential elections to have higher voter turnouts than state and local elections, I personally feel that more people should take those other elections more seriously. I'm sure you've heard that from your elders as I have for years. If you think that sounds boring, that your vote doesn't matter, or that it isn't worth your time, trust me — I was there before. But allow me to explain why it matters so much by breaking both down.

I grew up in a very small town in the middle of what is basically “the country” of my state. So please, trust me when I say this: I know that local elections it may not seem like they do much, but they do. Your vote is a superpower, and the first place you should use it is your local community. Local elections generally involve mayors and town/city officials, and are unique in a way as well, so here are two reasons why I will be voting in these elections:

- Casting a vote towards a mayor that best represents you and your vision for the community around you! If you believe something can be done differently to make the lives of those in your community easier, you can vote in someone who believes that too, or who is willing to listen to your feedback.
- States and sometimes their governors, specifically — we'll get into why voting for them is important later! — generally communicate with local leaders, and more so when they need something in particular from the state. Voting someone into office who is willing to do that communication contributes to a stronger community.

Next, let's look at the state and federal government elections. Since these are — obviously — larger branches of government, there are a lot of seats that come up for election every so often. The time alluded to in the phrase “every so often” varies from state-to-state. State elections tend to have slightly better or similar voter turnout than local elections, whilst

federal elections have even higher turnouts. The November 2020 election, for example, set a record for voter turnout in the United States.

State elections notably have their Governor's seats up for reelection periodically, along with many other positions that is beyond the scope of this article to cover. In short: there are many reasons to vote in these elections. Besides the obvious reasons, like it being your voice, here's why I'll be voting in them:

- **Representation in the legislature.** I keep throwing this term around but it's very important, as representation is the biggest reason why I'll personally be voting in these elections. Someone who is elected into any seat of state or federal government — be that House Reps, Senators, etc. — should understand the needs and wants of their constituents and communicate regularly with them in some form. Whether that communication is through social media, by email, mail, or phone.
- **Change.** Sometimes, the country just needs change. The best way to do that is using your vote. Take a look at what each candidate in the election believes in, and vote for what best represents your beliefs. If that's the change you want — make it known.
- **And finally, the Democratic Process.** One of the best parts of our government is the democratic process itself. Voting is a responsibility, a rite of passage, a civic duty. It's one of the most important and powerful tools you have a right to use, so why not use it? It's your right, after all.

Laying it all out like this, it may not seem like much. It may even seem tedious, but if this short post of mine at all convinced you to get out and vote in the next election, then it has served its purpose. It really meant a lot to me to write, so thank you for reading.

Let's make our voices heard.