

Election Evidenced Need to Expand Voting

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By Corey Bearak, *The Public Ought To Know*

Queens, NY – Election Days matters not just for the result – and many readers of Labor Press and The Public Ought To Know share strong feeling about the current outcome nationally and down the ballot.

Rather than focus on who attained what office where, this commentary directs its focus on participation via voting.

Everyone exercising their right to vote ensures that our political system functions properly; under-involvement plays into bad outcomes at the voting booth.

Many vote only when engaged; that includes excitement about a candidate – think the 2008 and 2012 vote surges

in the African-American community for President Barack Obama; it also includes fearing a candidate – great Latino turnout in the early Florida and Nevada voting and closer outcomes forecast in Arizona and Texas. And the first result I always look for compares the turnout this past election to the prior one. I noted a trend downward in participation each successive election since 2008. Pundits might argue who did not do what but the numbers for both sides were down, just that the winner's number were not down as much as the electoral vote loser. Bottom line, politics affects everything we do: garbage collection, snow removal, drinkable water, available electricity, driving age and ease of voting. Decisions made at one or more of the many levels of government influence or direct those aforementioned factors and more.

Whether we vote or not, we make political decisions, including turning on lights, turn the heat up or down (or AC in warmer weather), flushing a toilet, driving or taking mass transit...

Greater popular involvement broadens the power base and reduces the influence of special interests. Easing voting promotes popular participation; it starts with easing and instant registration on Election Day and extending early voting opportunities to all states. Make Election Day a national holiday allows voting without worrying about running to local polls early in the morning before work or just before closing, after coming home late in the evening (Early voting also helps here.).

On a political listserve hosted by my professional network, some expressed concern about how we encourage voting. Absolutely no evidence, scientific or anecdotal, exists that early voting and the reporting about the numbers of voters who already voted, in person or by absentee ballot, influences any election outcome, according to polling expert Dr. Gerald M. Goldhaber. This past Tuesday showed turnout matters. So let's empower ourselves by advocating every



reasonable means to ensure our voting franchise.

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