

# Get out and vote

Community Comment  
October 26, 2012  
Sam Pennisi

A week from Tuesday America will go to the polls. We, the people, will have the extraordinary opportunity and the grave responsibility of electing fellow citizens to represent us at all levels of government. In Humboldt County, we will decide on local school initiatives, District boards, City Council members, State Representatives, Members of Congress, Senate Members, and the Presidency.

While there is evidence of voter suppression in many states, the opportunity to vote is still free and open to most people. We could do better. As the beacon of democracy for the rest of the world, we should do better. We vote on a work day. We could consider voting over a two day period on a week end but we have not. We have, however, implemented voting by mail. For many people, this has helped considerably.

The sad state of affairs is that, once again, we will be lucky to get 40 percent of eligible voters to actually cast their ballots.

I hear people say that they don't have the time, or that they were too busy to register, or that their vote wouldn't matter, or it doesn't matter who wins because they are all alike anyway. What a bunch of malarkey.

We have the great luxury to live in the United States of America. We have a public education system that provides free access to a high school education. We have free radio and television stations and networks who do a great job of informing us of when all the deadlines are and what we have to do to be eligible to vote. We seem to know all the game scores; I don't buy the complaint that we don't know what we need to do to vote.

But in the end, it is our responsibility to get registered and vote by mail or in person. Just because we were born into this society and country doesn't mean that we don't have to put ourselves out and actually participate.

The founders of this country expected to create an educated public. As citizens, we have the responsibility to know the issues and the candidates from which we may choose. That means we have to work a little. We have to read. We can listen to debates. We have to be able to do some analysis of the information presented and even be able to separate fact from fiction. These are skills that are basic to a reasonable level of education.

Many local offices are non-partisan; meaning they don't require being a member of a political party. At the state and federal level, however, we work within a two party system. We have had primary elections to select the final candidates.

And we have had mailers and television and radio ads to the point of saturation. By November 6, we should all be ready to make an informed decision and vote. Remember

this when you make this choice; the choice for the Presidency is not just between two men. It is also a choice between two political parties and what those parties outlined as their platforms during their conventions. They are quite different and their candidate will be likely to stand by those party priorities. There is a lot at stake. Please do your homework and make a real informed decision. Too many people, Americans, have died to give you this precious opportunity. Give it the serious thought it deserves.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.