

Community Comment
June 3, 2016
Sam Pennisi

The right to vote

This coming Tuesday is the California Primary. This is a Presidential Election year as if you didn't know. I always think you have to live under a rock to not know that. But for many people, politics is not only boring but it seems unrelated to the realities of daily life. Following our brand of politics takes some effort. Campaigning for office and the reality of governing seem to be two different things. Our election cycles seem to go on endlessly. Beyond that, understanding our government with its three branches of government seems messy and contrary to getting anything done. Then there is our two party system. Today, we seem to have multiple parties within the two major parties. At the end of campaign season, we are expected to vote at some polling place on a Tuesday on which most of us work. In the United States of America, which defined modern ideas of a people's government and the right to vote, less than half of us bother to cast a ballot.

We all need to remember what this kind of freedom of choice costs. Men and women died in a revolution with a country most of them came from just for the ability to govern themselves. We should have never won that war but we did. People then crafted a constitution that forms the basis for our laws and practices of governing. This document was well crafted and compromise sealed its adoption.

We fought another war to clarify that we were one nation and that slavery was intolerable to our basic tenants. Hundreds of thousands of men on both sides of that conflict, sometimes fathers against sons and brothers against brothers, died to preserve the national union.

We fought World War One to help keep a rogue European state from taking over Europe and seriously affecting our way of life. This was thought to be the War to end all wars.

Then we fought a second world war in Europe and the Pacific. Many of us had relatives in this war. We fought and won this war to preserve our inherent freedoms and human rights. Again, the cost in life and resources and treasure was great. But our world is more free today than probably at any point in our history.

This may seem like any other presidential primary but none of them are ordinary. We have the opportunity next Tuesday to go to the polls and cast a vote for the person and party you think best represents your values and your policy positions. This is the moment you can think about the person that has offered themselves to hold perhaps the most important office in the world today. You, the voter, can judge their temperament, qualifications, experience, and abilities. You, we, actually have a say in this special government of ours. It may not be perfect but I wouldn't trade it for anything else I've seen.

I know many of you will not vote the way I will. That doesn't matter. Your vote is equal to mine. The more we voters vote, the better our government will be. It will better represent us and will be more responsive to us. We , then, need to hold our representatives accountable. We are the people this government is of, for, and by.

This right to vote cost too much to ignore.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.