

Persuasive Essay

During a warm, autumn day inside a second grade classroom, twenty-four excited students stood up with right hands over their hearts. In unison they proudly said, “*I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.*” (1.) At this private school in Utah, all of the students recite the Pledge of Allegiance every day. At a young age, children are taught about “America’s discovery, settlement, and revolution, cultivating a deep respect for the price that was paid for their freedom and their rights.” (2.) Unfortunately, in local public schools, this emphasis is lacking. The voter turnout in the United States is lower than many other democratic countries, and this is a huge concern. One way to increase voter turnout is to emphasize education and cultivate in every school across the Nation pride in our country.

There was a conversation overheard between two high school principals discussing the Pledge of Allegiance. Both of them agreed that it would be too much of a distraction to try and have the kids repeat the pledge of allegiance each day, and that it would be better to just say it once a week at most. What a surprising thing to hear, especially because it only takes possibly one or two minutes to have everyone stand up, repeat the Pledge, and then sit back down. If this is the mentality that is in high schools, it is no wonder why students are so apathetic towards being involved in politics and voting. Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in all schools is a very easy way to start with teaching children pride in our country. Another way is to make sure elementary, junior high, and high school students are learning about elections and voting. A new study from the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates that about one-third of our nation's 12th graders did not learn about elections and voting in 2010. (3.)

One of the best ways to increase voter turnout is to start with children. Teach them how to vote, why to vote, when to vote, and where to vote. This can be done in schools, in Cub Scout and Boy Scout Programs, in homes, and other community events. It should not be done only in one high school American Government class; it should be done throughout the school year in as many grades as possible. In the same NAEP study, there has been a significant drop in the percentage of Twelve Graders studying the US Constitution. It has dropped from 72% in 2006 to 67% in 2010. Again, with this drop, it is not a surprise why voter turnout is the lowest in voters ages 18-24. Increasing what is currently being taught to children about the US Constitution, the Founding Fathers, and why it is important to show love for the Nation by voting and participating in elections is one way to increase voter turnout.

There are many other ways that voter turnout can be increased. There is a common view on voting, and it is “I don’t even bother voting because my vote doesn’t really count anyway.” There is truth to that statement, and sadly it is, “If you don’t vote, of course your vote won’t be counted.” There needs to be a change in this mentality as well. Change in this mentality can happen through more community educational programs for adults.

There was an article that stated, “Adding a Vote by Mail option in low turnout elections would greatly increase participation.” (4.) For those that are not motivated to go into polling locations, or have jobs that make it hard to go, or are in able to physically make it to vote, this is a great option. “Oregon has been exemplary in its use of Vote By Mail. Since 1998, voting there occurs exclusively by mail and its 87 percent turnout led the country in the 2004 elections. Other states, such as California, have similarly experienced an increase in turnout from Vote By Mail, though only in low turnout elections. However, most states have not adopted Vote By Mail and at best allow for no-fault absentee ballots.” (4.) Although there

are some disadvantages to Vote by Mail, such as voter fraud, it can be an option to help in every state. Other options to increase voter turnout have been addressed. For example: changing to online voting, same day registration, move election day to a Monday and make it a federal, banking holiday, fix gerrymandering, and have all states provide early voting. (5.) These are all great ideas as well, but almost cater to a nation that is becoming more lazy and have lost the enjoyment of being involved in politics. There needs to be a foundation of education built upon every citizen of this great Country.

Watching children who are being taught about our Nation and singing songs as a classroom that celebrate our country is an amazing thing to observe. At one of the private schools in Utah, the children know many patriotic songs such as, "I'm Proud to be an American", "My Country Tis of Thee", and "America the Beautiful". The children sing the songs with joy and excitement; they are even taught the history of each song. They learn, memorize, and present speeches about our country. This education brings out emotion of love for this wonderful country and it instills pride in this country. When there is pride, love, and concern for this country, and citizens have a desire for the best things to happen for the United States of America, then voter turnout will increase.

(1) "Pledge of Allegiance"

<http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/04C1.txt>

(2) Challenger School Essential Curriculum

http://www.challengerschool.com/essential_curriculum.php

- (3) The Nations Report Card: Civics 2010 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AT GRADES 4, 8, AND 12
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2010/2011466.pdf>
- (4) Michael Francus *Voter Turnout is Dismal in the U.S., Vote By Mail Can Help Fix It*
<http://www.policymic.com/index.php/debates/8304>
- (5) Anthony Morse Political Consultant for Forbes *What Is The Best Way To Increase Voter Participation Rates In The United States*
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2012/10/16/what-is-the-best-way-to-increase-voter-participation-rates-in-the-united-states/>