

Ignorance Isn't Bliss: How Americans Should be Making Themselves Aware for Whom and for What they are Voting

2nd Year Advocacy Project

Why does this matter?

Voting is the cornerstone of democracy, but voting blind leads to casted votes that do not properly represent the actual beliefs of voters. Studies suggest that if better informed, many voters would have changed their votes, specifically low income voters. This vote switching would likely have led to a different government composition. Arguments that voting blind is just as much a right as voting in general fail to recognize that elected leaders not only have power over those who voted for them, but over the society they represent as a whole.

This issue also goes beyond ignorance regarding candidates and into ignorance of the government overall. In a survey taken in 2014, less than 40% of the public knew which party had control of the House or the Senate.

Without voters making informed decisions, the role of voting feels diminished and undermines educated voters.



Who is this affecting?

Surprisingly enough, this affects college students at the highest level. This could be from a multitude of reasons being lack of education or even the fact that they are barely of voting age and have not had the time to learn yet. Either way the main problem lies in the younger generation and goes down increasingly with age. The best part about college age people having the lowest levels of political knowledge, is that the internet is often at the tips of our fingers and many aged in this category are very familiar with using the internet. That being said, we are the easiest to educate.

83 The percentage of people who failed a civic knowledge test after being confident they could pass

38 The percentage of people who were able to name the party controlling the House and the Senate

33 The average score of 18-29-year-olds on a political knowledge test compared to average of 50 for those aged 65 and up.

How can you help?

There are lots of ways to educate voters. For minimal effort there are websites like ISideWith that offers users a quiz that can point them in the direction of candidates they seem to agree with based on their answers. Open campaign offers a similar quiz. There are also quizzes from news outlets such as the Washington Post and the New York Times, but ISideWith is notoriously unbiased and nonpartisan.

There are also websites that offer information on candidates and even party beliefs if one is willing to take the time to read. Politico, On the Issues, and Vote Smart offer extensive information on elections and issues in the election.

Getting the word out about sources like this may seem like a relatively simple solution, but could make all the difference even if just a few hundred more voters are informed better before casting votes.

References

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