

# M A N D A T O R Y



## A N E C E S S A R Y D E M O C R A T I C R E F O R M

The 2020 election incited a massive push to the polls, especially within communities that have often had the lowest turnout numbers, with President Joe Biden earning more votes than any other candidate in history. The enthusiasm with which young voters and people of color cast their ballots is indicative of the deep partisan passion that surrounded this race. The surge in turnout vastly impacted the results, allowing Biden to win historically red states such as Arizona and Georgia.

This comes at a time when political apathy is becoming increasingly prevalent in America,

reflected by the fact that the U.S. consistently has lower voter turnout than most other democracies, according to the Pew Research Center.

One possible solution — one that has proven contentious among many constituents — is making voting mandatory.

Though over two dozen countries have made voting mandatory, the Pew Research Center found that only 21% of Americans favor it. However, making voting mandatory might be exactly what our democracy needs at a time when it seems more fragmented than ever.

namely young and minority communities. People are quick to cite laziness as the reason for the low turnout in these demographics, but the situation is often more complex.

Voter suppression invariably impacts underprivileged communities the most. For example, voter ID laws require voters to present government-issued identification to prevent voter fraud. These laws often lead to the underrepresentation of young people, those in poverty, and racial minorities, with 17 percent more African Americans lacking voter ID than whites, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

### LOW VOTER TURNOUT HAS LONG RESULTED IN ELECTED OFFICIALS THAT DO NOT TRULY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE ENTIRE ELECTORATE.

Some ideas that are considered “radical” by those in office are widely supported by the public. According to CNBC, 54% of Americans support Medicare for All and 57% support tuition-free public colleges.

Politicians are quick to spew rhetoric about radical ideas being “anti-American,” but looking at the majority of public opinion, these are the exact policy changes the American people want.

Mandatory voting would result in greater turnout in often underrepresented populations,

Furthermore, minority communities tend to have fewer polling locations, resulting in longer wait times. The American Bar Association found that 15% of African Americans struggle to find a polling place, compared to 5% of whites. People waiting in line after the polls close can still vote, but many are unaware of this right and allow themselves to be dismissed at polling places. This issue was only exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which caused a surge in early voting, making people wait hours.

Gerrymandering, the practice of manipulating electoral districts for partisan gain, often suppresses the vote of the minority party in an area. According to Northeastern University, this can cause feelings of isolation, and people failing to turn out.

But even people who have no difficulty voting often don’t because of the growing mentality among constituents that their vote doesn’t matter. This mindset was prevalent in the 2016 election, when Hillary Clinton’s supporters neglected to vote because they felt her lead was solid enough.

This mentality is dangerous. Often, just a few votes can play a crucial role in changing the results of an election. This fact was apparent in the 2020 election, wherein Joe Biden won two Massachusetts towns that Hillary Clinton lost in 2016 by just a single vote each.

opportunity to vote, and those who have intentionally neglected voting in the past would be forced to go to the polls.

Opponents of mandatory voting often cite fears of uninformed people making decisions that impact the country. After all, elections do have consequences, and people want to make sure everyone is making an educated decision.

However, making voting mandatory actually increases the incentive to get informed about politics. If people know they have to vote in elections, they’ll be more inclined to pay attention to politics, overall leading to a more informed electorate. In a study conducted by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, political knowledge was more evenly spread out across all ethnic backgrounds in countries with compulsory voting.

Mandatory voting is the best path to create the actual, systemic change the U.S. desperately needs. In a time full of hate and division, radical reform is essential. By allowing everyone to have a voice, we can promote diversity in the government by electing officials that truly represent modern America.

The backbone of American democracy has always been “of the people, by the people, for the people,” and with the necessary reform, there may be a democratic process for all of the people.







by Jenna Lee

If voting were made mandatory in the United States, we would be forced to streamline the electoral process in a way that gives everyone an equal



photo by Alissa Gary

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-  **NEW JERSEY**  
DISTRICT 5
-  **ARIZONA**  
DISTRICT 6
-  **CALIFORNIA**  
DISTRICT 43
-  **TEXAS**  
DISTRICT 15
-  **ILLINOIS**  
DISTRICT 11
-  **OHIO**  
DISTRICT 4

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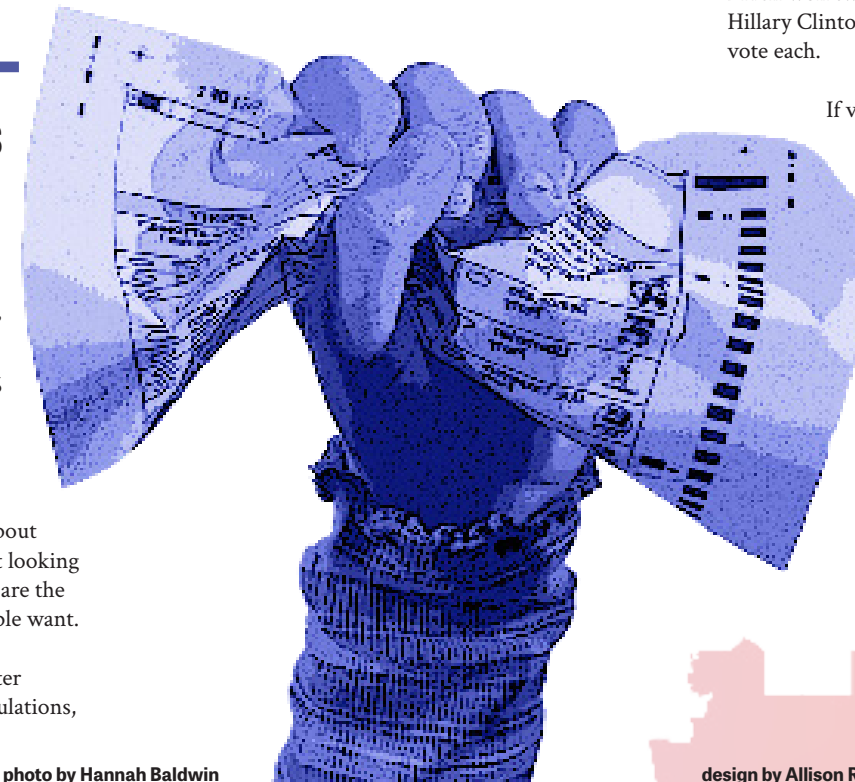


photo by Hannah Baldwin

design by Allison Robbert

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