

# Why Vote?

## To Protect Our Democracy ... And Get A Sticker

By Ziyad Abdelfattah

Albany High School, Grade 9

The complimentary “I Voted” sticker is obviously a big draw for teens into the voting sphere, as one of our top priorities is making a fashion statement. If this tempting prize is not enough, we must dig deeper to highlight voting incentives for the otherwise skeptical youth. They are so skeptical, in fact, that more than half of eligible, young voters avoid the polls. But voting incentives are real and compelling: Policies will be geared toward youth if the voting force comes from that same group; we will eliminate the contradiction between our zeal for democracy and our actual political apathy; and we profoundly influence the future through a simple civic duty.

Marketing firms long ago tapped into the goldmine that is the youth demographic. Companies reap profits by designing products to meet the youth demand. We will see a similar trend in politics if the youth voice their demands through voting. A candidate’s success will depend on addressing the concerns of youth. Youth participation will ensure that policies are structured with us in mind. Until the “new and improved” youth voting block appears, though, policies will continue to support the views and desires of the only dedicated voting block: The older, wealthier crowd.

The argument of “my vote doesn’t matter” is ironic given our general eagerness to spend billions of dollars around the world in spreading democratic ideals. We need to respect our unique global position by protecting our democracy through voting. Those with the negative attitude in actuality do not understand the long-term consequences of their inactions. With more and more eligible voters adopting this mentality, their collective absence of votes does matter. With fewer youth voters, our political leverage diminishes, so policies and candidates will not support the youth agenda. There are countless examples in our recent past, even at a nationwide level, that elections were decided by small margins of votes.

While it may be cliché to say the children are the future, it is true that one day today’s youth will be the adult generation. Decisions made through voting will affect youth the most because we will be around the longest to experience them and we will be the ones to finance them. Teens are anxious to get the benefits and privileges of adulthood, like drinking and driving (hopefully not at the same time). With this transition, though, we cannot ignore the responsibilities. Given that we are a generation accustomed to efficiencies, voting remains one of the easiest ways to make an impact. We need to take this opportunity to make our lives, our country, and the world a better place by voting.

Youth voting has increased since 2000 by 11% among 18-24 year-olds. Youth voters are beginning to see that for the government to work with them, they must work with the government by voting. If voting continues to increase among eligible youth, the political landscape and the course of history will change positively. Also, you get a sticker.