

A Vote for Your Children

Reasons not to vote:

My vote isn't going to make that big of a difference.

I hate politics.

No politician cares about me.

I don't have childcare.

My husband will vote, so I don't have to.

It's raining.

Nobody asked me to.

I have a headache.

I don't have any way to get to the polls.

I'm not registered.

I don't really know how.

In the 2000 election, 22,000,000 single women did not vote for many of these reasons. Each woman who decided not to vote was one of 22,000,000. Imagine the power of 22,000,000 women.

Most of us have forgotten, or never even knew, what women in the early years of the 20th century went through for the right for you and I to vote. I know too often I take my right for granted. Privileged people often take their rights for granted. Voting is a privilege I have never had to question.

But before 1920, no woman had the privilege. In what's been called the "Night of Terror" on Nov. 15, 1917, thirty-three women suffragists, who had been picketing the Woodrow Wilson White House for months for the right to vote, were attacked, arrested, beaten, handcuffed and hung by their hands from cell bars in the Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia on the trumped-up charge that they were obstructing traffic. Their leader Alice Paul went on a hunger strike until the guards strapped her to a chair and forced a feeding tube down her throat into her stomach. These women were tortured like this for weeks until word smuggled out to the press. The president hired a psychiatrist to pronounce Alice insane. The doctor refused saying, "Courage in women is often mistaken for insanity." It took these women three more years of courage before the 19th amendment was added to the Constitution affording women to be considered equal

citizens to men by giving them the right to vote. This amendment was passed by one vote.

It's hard for us today to imagine that that right was even in question. We must never forget what many women gave up their marriages, their families, even their lives to fight for. It is our privilege to vote. It's not a duty, not an obligation—it's a privilege. As we learned so well in the 2000 election, every single vote does count. John Kennedy won by less than one vote per precinct. As parents, you are voting for what you believe to be the path to the best future for your children. To say it doesn't matter, to think it's not important is to not think at all. Our children's education, social services, ability to attend college, the air they breathe, the economy they must live and work in is dependent on our votes. No, we can't all get the candidate we want. And maybe the candidates we have to choose from are not ones we even want, but they are the only ones we have, and our choice matters. If you don't vote, you don't have the right to complain. Voting is your way to voice your opinion. Don't let your opinion fall silent.

If you don't think you know enough to make an educated choice, check out www.channelone.com. This is a bipartisan website focused on getting everyone to vote. They list the issues and how each candidate stands on them. They give many facts about previous elections to convince us how important each and every vote is. There is a lot there to help you understand what is being said and who is saying it. Also www.onevotefilm.com has a very powerful short little video about the 22,000,000 women who did not vote in the last election. It will convince you if nothing else does.

I encourage you to take your children to the polls with you for some very important modeling. Tell them how important what you're doing is. Your children will grow up counting the years until they too can vote. If you have any trouble with transportation, call me at 924-6639. A network of people will make sure you get there. If you are not registered, you can do that anytime up until 10 days before the election. If you forget, you can register on the day of election at the same time and place you go to vote. There will be friendly warm people there to help you. The process is easy. If no one has asked you, I'm asking you. Do it for yourself. Do it for your children. Do it for your future and your children's future. Do it for all the young people who aren't old enough to vote. Do it for the women who fought for your right.