

Weekly Report  
Week of 9-6

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### Voting: A Privilege and Duty.

In America one of our most dearly held freedoms is our ability to select our leaders. The right to vote has been earned by the sacrifice of many over the years who have fought to ensure that this privilege is protected. Not only is the right to vote a matter of national pride, it is also a favorite topic of discussion every other November, especially during a presidential election year such as this one. You can hardly turn on the television or drive down the street without seeing signs or commercials urging us to cast our vote for one candidate or another.

Yes it is undeniable, almost as much as we love apple pie and baseball, we love to talk and joke about voting and politics. Take for example the comment of one man who remarked, "We'd all like t'vote fer th'best man, but he's never a candidate." Unfortunately, although we Americans love to talk about voting, for far too many that's where it ends. We talk, but we don't actually vote. A look at the statistics is sobering. Of the nearly 4.3 million Missourians that are eligible to 2 out of 10 are not even registered to vote. And of the registered voters in this state, only about 51% voted during the general election in 2002. Jackson County was slightly higher than the state average with nearly 56% of registered voters casting a ballot but we could do better. More recently, in Missouri's primary election last month only 43% of the registered voters statewide turned out to vote, which was considered a relatively high turnout.

Admittedly, fewer people vote during a political primary than during a general November election but the numbers are disturbing. The right and ability to vote is important and far too many Missourians are not exercising it. Regardless of your political views, let me encourage you get involved in the political process. Find a campaign and volunteer. Put up signs or pass out literature. Most of all take time to get informed and to vote.

Franklin Roosevelt once said, "Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves—and the only way they could do this is by not voting." Don't be one that throws away your vote this November. Many races are decided by narrow margins. Get registered, get out to the polls and make your vote count.

I am awed by pictures of citizens of Afghanistan standing in long lines just to get registered to vote. For many of these folks, the Afghan presidential election will be the first time in their lives that they have ever had an opportunity to have a voice in who leads Afghanistan. We Americans take for granted our right to vote. We shouldn't. Millions of people the world over have no say in who leads their country.

If you have not registered to vote, have recently moved, or if you are going to be out of town on the day of the election, please call the Jackson County Election Board at 325-4600 to make sure you are able to vote in the upcoming election. As always, if you have any questions or comments, please write to me at [matt\\_bartle@senate.state.mo.us](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us).