



Why Your Vote Counts

JEFFERSON CITY — This is a true voting story from the pages of American history that I hope will encourage all of you to exercise your right to vote in the upcoming presidential election on Nov. 4. It highlights the importance and power of just one vote.

Back in 1776 when the delegates of the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia to debate a formal resolution of independence from Great Britain, Congressional delegate General Caesar Rodney was some 80 miles away in his home state of Delaware dealing with rebellions from Loyalists who threatened the cause for independence. Rodney was also absent from Congress because of failing health. He suffered from asthma and had a disfiguring form of cancer that was spreading across his face.

On July 1, 1776, Rodney received a letter from his fellow Delaware delegate, Thomas McKean, notifying him of an imminent vote on independence and asking him to make an immediate appearance in Philadelphia to cast a vote for independence. With less than 24 hours to get to Philadelphia, Rodney quickly mounted his horse and traveled toward Philadelphia without pause or uncertainty. He was mindful that a third Delaware delegate, George Read, would cast an opposing vote. Rodney's vote was necessary to determine where Delaware would come down on the issue. A unanimous vote from every colony was vital to support the resolution.

During his journey, Rodney weathered conditions that would have tested anyone's resolve and strength. He rode for hours through the scorching July heat and endured powerful rainstorms that saturated his clothes. Undaunted by the elements, Rodney didn't think twice about his mission, didn't rest, and didn't turn back.

The rest, of course, is American history. Rodney arrived in Philadelphia, exhausted and dirty from his long journey, and as his colleagues described, "in his boots and spurs." He cast his vote for independence, thus tilting the balance of the Delaware delegation in favor of independence and ultimately solidifying Congress' movement towards a new form of government free from British rule.

One person. One vote. It does make a difference. Please exercise your civic duty as a Missourian and U.S. citizen and cast your vote in the upcoming presidential election. The last day to register to vote is Oct. 8. You can register to vote at public schools, libraries, city halls or at the following Election Authority offices: St. Charles County Election Authority, 397 Turner Blvd., St. Peters, phone: 636-949-7550; or Lincoln County Election Authority, 201 Main St., Troy, phone: 636-528-6300. Voter registration applications are also available online at www.sos.mo.gov.

Absentee ballots may be cast until 5 p.m. on Oct. 29 with your local election authority.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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