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American Citizen Essay Contest

Every four years, on the first Tuesday of November, we American people vote for our president. For 232 years, we have elected a president that we want to lead, represent, and protect our country. Forty-four people have taken on the responsibilities, hardships, and privileges of being our president. This year, we have the opportunity to vote. So, what is voting, and why is it so important?

We have the amazing opportunity here in America to decide our own future. We can decide who we want to lead us and who we want to represent our nation. We get the opportunity to vote. When we put our vote in, it doesn't get thrown out, it is taken into consideration. *Every vote counts*. Barack Obama said, "There is no such thing as a vote that doesn't matter." At first though, this was not the case. It used to be that only white men could vote. Then, in 1869, the 15th Amendment was passed saying that African American, or often called black, men could vote. Then in 1920, 100 years ago, the 19th Amendment was passed saying that all women were allowed to vote. Then in 1971, the 26th Amendment was passed saying that only those citizens 18 years old and older could vote.

To be able to vote, there are some requirements. First, you must be at least 18 years old. Second, you must register. Third, you must be a U.S citizen. There are five ways to be or become a U.S. citizen. First, if you were born in the U.S., you are automatically a U.S. citizen. Second, if at least one of your parents were U.S. citizens at the time that you were born, then you are a U.S. citizen. Third, if you are under 18 when your parent or parents become citizens, then you may become a citizen as well. Fourth, if you sign up for the U.S. Armed forces, namely the Navy, Marines, Army, Coast Guard or Air force, and in some cases the Space force. Finally, you must live in the U.S. for a certain amount of time, and you must take and pass an English test, as well as a U.S. history and government test, better known as civics. You must also be of good moral character, meaning that you have no criminal record. Once you have become a citizen and are at least 18 years old, you are officially able to register to vote.

Imagine if we weren't allowed to vote for our president. How would they be picked? Would they draw a name from a hat? Or would our congress decide? What if our congress was biased. Then, they chose who they wanted, but we had absolutely no say whatsoever in the matter. That would not be fair. Because we have the right to vote, we can participate in choosing our leaders.

When many people think of 'America' they think justice, rights, constitution, Declaration of Independence, and especially the ability and privilege to vote. In the dictionary it states that voting is a choice. A choice that many other people in other countries don't have. Many people have immigrated here because of this reason. The privileges and rights that the American

nation gives is what sets it apart from the world. It is what makes people desire to come to the red, white, and blue. In 1620, we broke apart from England so that we could be free from the lack of representation that was there. We wanted to be able to start a new, better, fairer country. On July 4, 1776, we declared with a strong voice, our privilege, our right, and our entitlement to the long lasting wish of freedom. After that came our Constitution, stating the rights and privileges that each American citizen gets. Susan B. Anthony said, "Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it." This is extraordinarily true. We should take that opportunity.

Abraham Lincoln once said: "The ballot is stronger than a bullet." How ironic. It is amazing that we can vote. I think that people should vote. Then, you get a voice, an opportunity, and a sticker. I can't wait until I am allowed to vote. I am very excited to be able to get that sticker, and to be able to have my opinion taken into consideration. Think about that: one in 382 million people in this country, and I get a vote.