



Why Don't People Vote? Challenges to Voting in America Today

(Middle/High School)

Below are ten reasons people often give why they don't vote. In pairs or small groups, discuss which reasons you think indicate real problems with elections in the United States. Choose three to share with the class. Then as a class, create a list of the five most important problems with elections in the United States today.

- 1) "I work in a factory all day. It's not very safe and I have no insurance and the pay is bad. I want a political party that fights for what I need."
- 2) "It's too much trouble. Anyway, who ever heard of somebody winning by one vote?"
- 3) "When I went to vote for the governor last year, I knew which candidate I wanted to vote for. But on the ballot there were candidates for nineteen other offices, too! How can I find out about all these candidates? It's too much."
- 4) "I don't read very well. It would take too long for me to read what the candidates say."
- 5) "I'd like to vote for Smith for mayor. He's an honest guy. He wants to make the schools better and help small businesses. But he doesn't have a chance. The other candidate, Taylor-he's a millionaire. He's got signs on every street, and ads on T.V. every night."
- 6) "It's cold and rainy outside. I just got home and I'm tired. I need to fix dinner. I'll vote next time."
- 7) "I knew I had to register to vote, but I didn't know where to go or what number to call to find out. Then my neighbor said I could register at the library. But when I went, they said they only registered until a month before the election. Now it's two weeks before the election so I'm too late. The government sure doesn't make it easy for me to vote!"
- 8) "Both parties are the same."
- 9) "They're just going to do things for big businesses. They don't care about us. Anybody can see we're just getting poorer."
- 10) "I don't know what their ideas are! The TV ads are so short, and each candidate just talks about how bad the other one is."

NEXT STEPS

Can you think of ways to solve any of the problems? Who do you think might be able to help? Write a plan for how you might address these problems. Share it with your parents or a public official to see what they think.