

# 2024

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# VOTER RESOURCE GUIDE

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# Introduction.

The purpose of **The Move** is to educate and meaningfully engage young voters, arming them with the necessary tools to remain civically empowered. One of these tools is this very resource guide.

Elections and the civic process can be exhausting. We often see systemic and systematic issues that directly impact our communities ignored and pushed aside. People always say that you should vote, but they never say why. Sometimes they even tell you how to vote. We see you and we hear you, and honestly at times we share that same struggle. But nothing gets better by not voting. Every pivotal civil rights movement in the United States has hinged on improving voting access. This guide discusses the importance of voting and why it should be practiced. Every election has consequences that directly impact you! Even if you don't see the positive progress immediately as a result of your vote, good things often take a lot of time and effort to change. Oppressive systems are not impenetrable, but they are built to last by relying on public disinterest in politics. By not voting you are backing out, and we want you to lean in! Your voice matters, and it has power!

We hope that this resource guide will help to make becoming an informed voter, active citizen, and advocate not only easier, but exciting. Choosing the next president, mayor, or councilwoman should be just as fun as watching the Super Bowl, except it's you that wins when you vote.



# Why You Should Care.

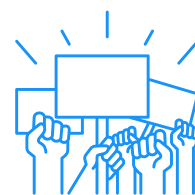
We know that it can feel like your vote doesn't matter. There are tons of systems in place to make you feel that way. But if you want to amplify the impact of your vote, know that your civic engagement journey starts at the polls. In this guide we break down ways to make greater change in your community and country after you cast your ballot. For this section, we'll focus on why that first step of voting is so important. After all, the best efforts start with the end in mind. **While there are more reasons to vote than we can list, here are some of the big ones:**

## 1. You Pay Taxes.



Whether you started working as a camp counselor or cashier to make some extra funds at 13 or you're working your first job out of college, you're giving the government parts of your income. The IRS doesn't play games. Those taxpayer dollars fund the social programs and systems that impact your day to day life. They pay for the roads you drive on, the public schools that educate you, and the salaries of the elected officials that represent you. You can have direct input on what is happening in your country and state when you vote.

## 2. Suffrage was won, not given.



Countless lives have been lost and endless bloodshed in our ancestors' efforts to ensure that all Americans have an equal opportunity to vote. If we don't learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it. If we don't appreciate the progress that has been made, we are liable to lose that progress and its benefits. We should not take for granted that these efforts from activists, some of whom gave their lives, to ensure that we, their future generations, have these rights protected. Due to these sacrifices we have the right to vote, but don't get caught up. There are active efforts to restrict voting access happening daily.

### 3. Represent your voice.



While you're juggling your day to day responsibilities, you shouldn't have to worry about whether who represents you reflects your values and beliefs. Our elected officials should mirror the communities they serve. There should be an emphasis on the diversity of thought, experience, education, and culture that result in the best policy decisions being made on your behalf. To achieve this goal, your participation is required. To make sure our elected officials never forget who they represent, you can hold them accountable with your vote.

### 4. One vote matters.



The smallest things are decided by elections. The biggest things are decided by elections. Your vote could legalize marijuana nationally! Your vote could also decide the next president of the United States. In the 2000 Gore v. Bush election, Bush won Florida, and the election as a whole, by just 537 votes. If everyone chimed in, a group of people as small as your high school could win an election. Your singular vote can have major impacts. Races have been decided by a single vote.

### 5. They don't expect you to care.



This country was built on coordinated efforts to ensure that young voters stay uninformed and uninterested in politics. Your vote matters, and it is so crucial that politicians recognize how powerful the young and underrepresented voting block can be. Political campaigns often utilize data from previous elections to determine how to target their efforts. But what happens if you were not old enough to vote in the previous election, or only old enough to have voted in one election? You are then often not viewed as a priority target. Which means the wants and desires of our generation are blatantly ignored because we do not appear as an influential demographic.

**Making the decision not to participate means your opinion is valued less on what choices are being made for you. The harsh reality is, by not voting, you are benching yourself. But, you have the power to choose to be engaged. The following sections will build your knowledge, give you resources, and make sure you're ready to make positive and lasting change!**

# Civics 101.

**We live in a nation where, "We The people" have the power to vote.** The concept is similar to the Broadway success Hamilton; power to vote determines many aspects of life because our government is a democratic republic. Meaning "We The People" elect representatives who act as our voice in the government. Those elected officials hold office for terms of varying lengths and are re-elected based on how well they did representing us, their constituents.

The federal government is the overarching structure, or institution, that gets the most attention. They're charged with regulating the whole country at the highest level. That being said, we are a country of unified states, and each of those states has their own government. This system of government is known as federalism, "a system of government in which the same territory is controlled by two levels of government". State governments have a closer impact on our everyday lives, making your local vote even more important than your federal one.

The Federal Government is composed of three branches: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. Their powers were established through the U.S. Constitution. The executive branch is charged with the enforcement of laws and their execution. The executive branch includes the President, the vice president, and all the cabinet secretaries/political appointees. The legislative branch are the decision makers. They're meant to direct representatives and speak our direct voice. The legislative branch makes the rules, policies, and laws that we follow. They spend taxpayer dollars, can declare war, and have to agree with the individuals the president appoints to help them run the country. The legislative branch is composed of Congress. The 535 members of the two houses (the House and the Senate) that make up Congress, introduce and debate new bills that could potentially become laws. The judicial branch is composed of the judges and the courts system. That would include the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the country, but it is only an appeals court. They decide on the constitutionality of laws and if constitutional rights have been violated. Supreme Court justices are appointed by the president and have a life term. The Founding Fathers (the first freedom fighters) also built in checks and balances to ensure that no branch became too powerful. They greatly feared the rise of a monarch or king.

Oftentimes, our day to day lives are far more impacted by the state and local governments. That's why it's so important that we do our part and cast educated votes in as many elections as possible.

State Governments are modeled after the Federal Government consisting of three branches: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial



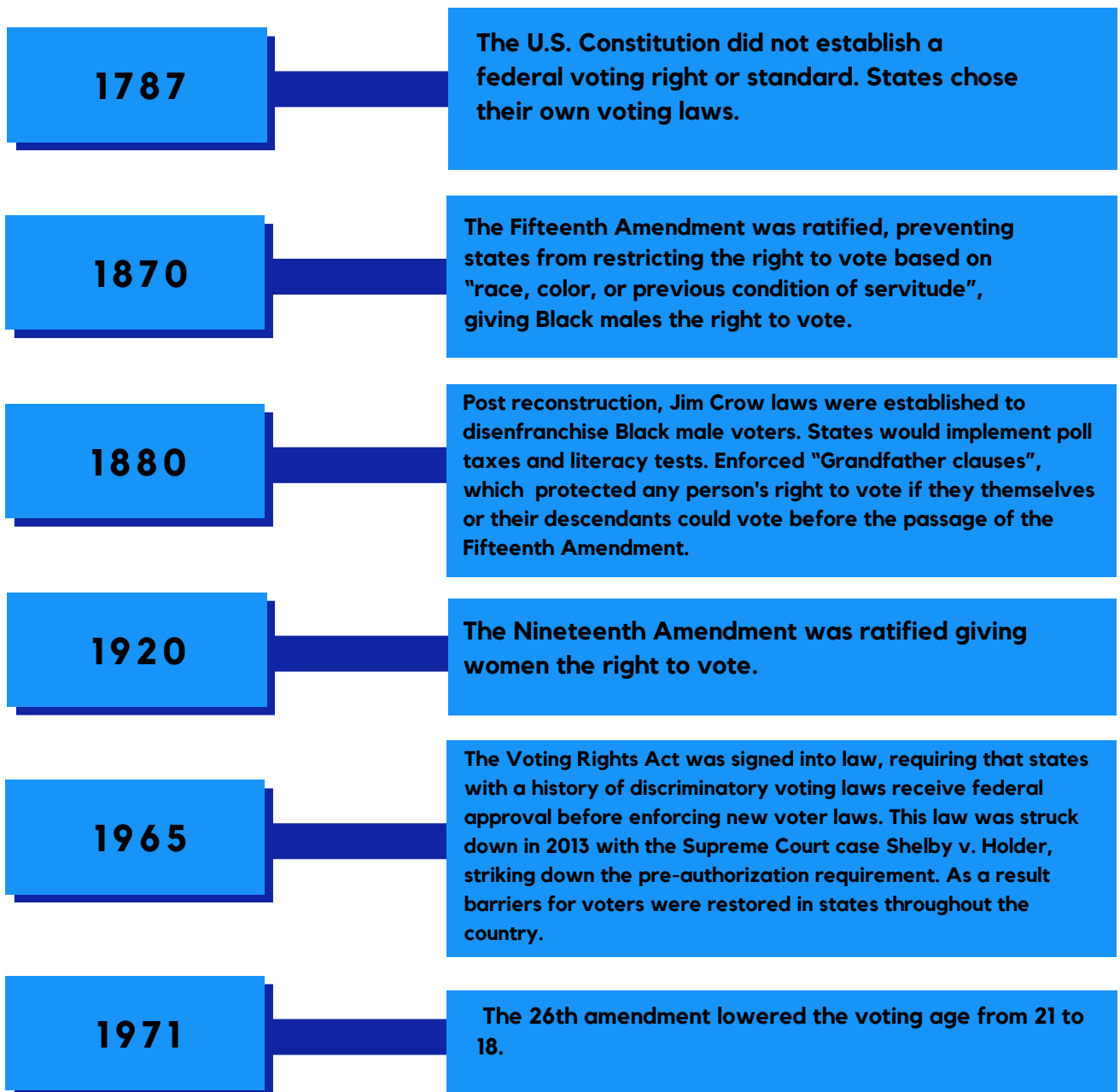
**Figure 1: Similarities of structure and powers held at the Federal, State and Local levels**

Executive Branch	Legislative Branch	Judicial Branch
<p>President (Federal) = Governor (State)</p> <p>Vice President (Federal) = Lt. Governor (State)</p> <p>While the positions of the state governments mirror the federal. How the executive branch is Structured in DE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor - Carney</li> <li>• Lt. Governor - Hall-Long</li> <li>• Governor's Cabinet</li> </ul>	<p>All 50 states have legislatures with elected officials that consider matters brought by the Governor and craft their own laws. Every state with the exception of Nebraska has a bicameral legislature</p> <p>Federal Government: Congress, Bicameral (House of Representatives and Senate) = Delaware Legislative Branch: General Assembly, Bicameral (House of Representatives and Senate)</p>	<p>Supreme Court = State Supreme Court</p> <p>"State judicial branches are usually led by the State supreme court, which hears appeals from lower-level State courts. Court structures and judicial appointments/elections are determined either by legislation or the State constitution. The supreme court focuses on correcting errors made in lower courts and therefore holds no trials.</p>

Source: The United States Government. (2022, July 12). State and Local Government. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/our-government/state-local-government/>

The right to vote has always been available — if you were a wealthy white man. The rest of the United States has had to advocate, fight, march, and organize for that right. The community leaders that fought for civil rights and equal rights wanted to ensure that every American was afforded the right to vote. All of that is to say, if you choose not to vote, you're giving up some of the power that had to be fought for — power to make positive change in your town, community, state, and country.

**Figure 2: Timeline: Brief History of Voting Rights in the United States**



Source: Timeline: Voting rights. Timeline: Voting Rights | Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. (n.d.). [https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/online-exhibitions/timeline-voting-rights?gclid=CjwKCAiAq4KuBhA6EiwArMAwIEhCYHvcgcQBWvFpXAXTP7A-TLPzghF0kySO6nCAO-rRj\\_QKzWBoCP88QAvD\\_BwE](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/online-exhibitions/timeline-voting-rights?gclid=CjwKCAiAq4KuBhA6EiwArMAwIEhCYHvcgcQBWvFpXAXTP7A-TLPzghF0kySO6nCAO-rRj_QKzWBoCP88QAvD_BwE)

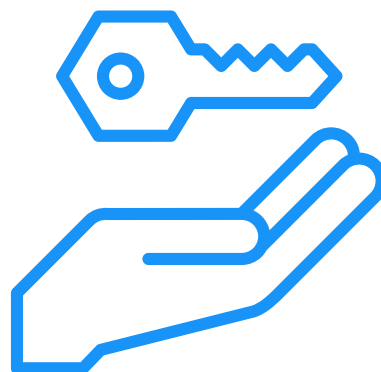


The two popular party system (currently: Democrat and Republican) flourishes when it allows for a variety of perspectives to be present amongst the different levels of government. It also plays a significant role in the electoral college. The electoral college is a complicated, yet important voting process that is utilized for the presidential election. "The Founding Fathers established the Electoral College in the Constitution, in part, as a compromise between the election of the President by a vote in Congress and election of the President by a popular vote of qualified citizens." What that means is that your vote is counted as a popular vote. In-keeping with the representative philosophy for governing these 50 united states, representatives of each state, called electors, cast ballots to actually elect the president and vice president of the United States. Fun fact: the number of electors for the electoral college votes that your state receives is equivalent to the number of congresspeople that you have. So in Delaware, for example, we have one member of congress and two senators, giving the First State three total electoral votes. This is why you should want to spread the good word about voting. The more popular votes that are cast for a specific candidate, the more difficult it is for an elector to cast a differing electoral vote.

We hope that this foundational knowledge helps to give you a better understanding of how the systems in place came to be.

## How Voting Works

You're 18! It's lit. Balloons and bottles, my guy. Happily glo day. A full 365 for you man. Happy born to you. Happy Anni Shawty. We're gonna take a second in the African American Vernacular (AAV): Happy Birthday to you, Happy birthday to you, Happy Birrrtthhhdaayy. HAAAPPPPPYYYYY BIRRTTHHHHDAAAY. - Stevie Wonder. There's a special gift for you... AND YOU CAN VOTE, if you're a citizen and a resident!



# Voting Rights

**"Voting is the language of American democracy."** Having the right to vote means having the ability to influence how the United States Government should function at the federal, state, and local levels. But not everyone who lives in the United States has the right to vote.

## Who can vote in the United States:

- U.S. Citizens.
- Those who meet their State's residency requirements.
- Those who are 18 years old on or before the election day.
- Those registered to vote by the voter registration deadline.

## Who can't vote in the United States:

- Non-citizens, including permanent legal residents who cannot vote in federal, state, and most local elections.
- Some people cannot vote after being convicted of a felony. The enforcement varies by state. But you can run for president!
- U.S. Citizens living in U.S. territories cannot vote in the general election.

This simple list of who can and cannot vote does not fully capture the complexity of voting rights in this country. Voting leads to representation, which leads to giving power to those who make important decisions that impact our day to day lives. The history of voting in this country is full of highs and lows and a lot has been done to expand voting rights and also suppress it.

Source: Who Can and Cannot Vote. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. (2024, August 8). <https://civilrights.org/value/voting-rights/>

# Delaware Landscape.

**"I'm out Delaware, My peoples heavy there!" - Bobby Dime\$**

This section will be specific to the tiny wonder, the diamond state, the First State – Delaware. While our focus will be on the three county beauty, you can access this information about any of the 50 states. You just need to search for your official state agency/department/entity dedicated to elections.

## Delaware Voting Laws



The Delaware Constitution, Article 5 (Elections) outlines your voting rights. It also ensures that those that are registered to vote can't be coerced, threatened, hindered or intimidated by any person or corporation when voting. We want to highlight Section 1 of Article 5: the general assembly has the power to change the "means, methods, and instruments" of elections as they had been established in order to "secure secrecy and the independence of the voter, preserve the freedom and purity of elections and prevent fraud, corruption and intimidation threat." This is very important because it gives the General Assembly the power to change election laws. Which ultimately means you have the power to influence election laws, because you elect who serves in the General Assembly.

Voting registration has been a priority for the Delaware General Assembly and at the national level. This was exemplified by the Delaware and National Motor Voter acts of 1993. Most of us that received a license, learners permit, and/or an ID after 1993 were automatically registered to vote at the DMV. More recently, with the passage of Senate Bill 5, Delaware Code now allows for the seamless registration of voters through the integration of Division of Motor Vehicles and other complying agency records.

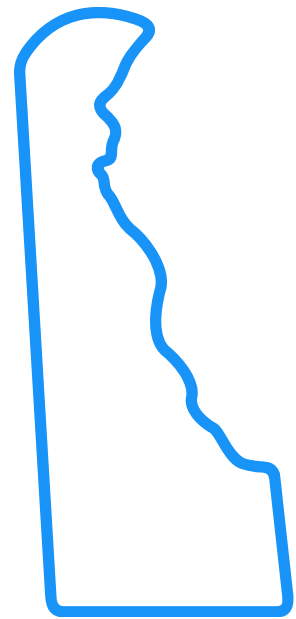
Delaware's voting laws are always evolving and are a key issue that Delawareans should care about.

## Where you vote: I.E. Districts and Polling Places

You are assigned a district based on lines drawn by the policymakers in your respective states along with census data. Census data is used to estimate the population so that districts have equal representation. The area an elected official represents is a district. In Delaware there are 41 House Districts, meaning there are 41 Delaware Representatives. Additionally, there are 21 Senate Districts in Delaware, so.. you guessed it... there are 21 Delaware State Senators. Then there are county districts, and so on and so forth. We know this is confusing. What is important to know is that your district is where you live and dictates who represents you. See the links below to find which district you belong to.

### District Maps

- [Senate Districts](#)
- [House Districts](#)
- [New Castle County](#)
- [Kent County](#)
- [Sussex County](#)



## Who do you vote for?

Who you vote for is the billion dollar question. Quite literally: billions of dollars are spent every election cycle on persuading voters. Your own philosophies and morals will tell you how you should vote. Again, that's not what this resource guide is meant to do. We're here to encourage you to become passionate about voting in an informed manner. Voting in this day-in-age does require work and energy, but so do all good things. You will have to do research, but luckily for you, we live in a time where you can gain access to so much information at your fingertips. The question you should ask yourself is this: **Who can best represent my voice and make my community a better place?**

## Challenges for Delaware voting:

Delaware does not truly have a voter registration problem. Through the legislative efforts mentioned above, the vast majority of Delaware is registered. The main challenge is *The People v. The Couch*. How to get voters motivated and actually to the polls is of much greater concern. Significant barriers to voting access, like transportation, polling place locations, and scheduling conflicts, have also impacted voter turnout in Delaware.

## Know who represents you:

In the Civics 101 section, Figure 1 discusses how the federal and state governments mirror one another. This section will lay out the Delaware state and local elected officials and the offices they occupy. It is important to know who currently holds office, so you know who to contact and hold accountable. Below you will find a few resources to learn about who represents you.

- [The Governor's Office](#)
  - [The Executive Branch](#) - The Lt. Governor who is elected by the people, and the Governor's Cabinet, who the governor appoints to run state agencies
- [Delaware General Assembly](#)
- [House of Representatives](#)
- [Senate](#)
- [New Castle County](#)
- [Executive Office](#)
- [County Council](#)
- [Kent County](#)
- [Sussex County](#)
- [County Council](#)
- [County Administrator](#)
- [Delaware Mayors and City/Town Managers](#)



# Voting Resources.

## Challenges for Delaware voting:

It's time to do the deed. Not that deed, stop being nasty. It's time to vote. It's time to go to the polls and cast that ballot. Know that you're killing it by getting to your own polling place and making your voice heard by voting. To go from good to great would be if you encouraged your neighbors, friends, family, co-workers, etc. to do the same, assuming they're eligible to vote. To go from great to spectacular, arrive with five people at the polling place. However you plan to get there, take the fam along with you!

After you all have cast your votes, CELEBRATE! Go to a brunch, catch a movie, or take a nap. Regardless, understand that you've exercised your civic duty and maybe enabled others to do the same. They not like us! Congratulations you connoisseur of the civic arts, you maximized and materialized real MOVE-ment!

If you need assistance in voting or encouraging those around you to do so too, please see the below resources! This list is by no means exhaustive, it's only what we know about — but rest assured these groups and initiatives are there for you leading up to and on the big day.

- [Delaware Early Voting](#)
- [Delaware Absentee Voting](#)
- [Polling Locations](#)
- [Useful Links and contacts](#)
- [Learn about the candidates](#)



# Get Involved.

If you want to push past the polls on Election Day, you can get involved. There are a variety of options when it comes to doing more than **just your civic duty**.

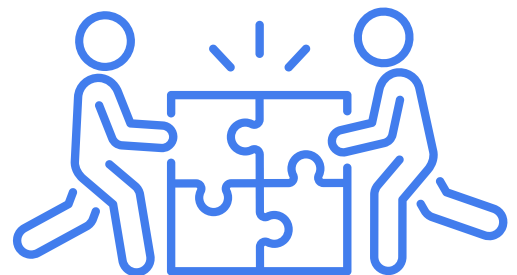
## Work at your polling place:

You can fulfill your civic duty while getting paid by becoming an election officer on Election Day. This way you can encourage your squad to pull up on you and they can vote too while they're there. Better yet, you can all become election officers to make some money as you vote and help your community. To become an election officer, inquire at the Delaware Department of Elections. The link can be found in the voter resources section of the guide.

## Volunteer for local campaigns:

If you're looking for a unique volunteer opportunity, you can get involved with a campaign. Campaigns utilize volunteers for a variety of tasks and efforts. So no matter what your skill set is, you can be a valuable asset to a candidate. There are also non-political campaigns, which focus on a cause rather than getting someone elected. This option may be for you if you're passionate about a policy topic or issue and want to push for solutions to be considered by policymakers. To get involved with a campaign, you can take a few different approaches:

- Approach a current volunteer.
- Go through an organization. Ex: NetworkDelaware
- Go to the campaign website.
- Reach out to your currently elected officials.



## Inspiring your community:

Be the change you want to see. If you know there's an issue that your community cares about, work to build a coalition for change. This is easier said than done, but it is a great and rewarding way to get involved. In most situations, a group can be more effective at reaching a desired outcome. Gather the community to take action together and you will be shocked what a passionate group can accomplish.

# I Voted ... What's Next.

Ayyeee... you voted! You've completed your civic duty and now all you have to do is wait for the next election cycle and do it all over again.. right? Welllll.....for some, their civic duty starts and ends for the polls. Others might be itching to do more. We know our generation is tired of the political status quo and wants to see some change. **If this is you, then know the journey to becoming a change agent only just begins at the polls.**

## Stay Informed.

The easiest and maybe most important thing you can do after you vote is stay informed. Knowing what's going on and what your elected officials are doing, even if it's in just one topic you care about, is so powerful. It's okay if you don't know how to stay informed on what is happening in your community, that's kinda why we put together this resource guide, because we get it. If you want to stay in the know, you can do things as simple as following the social media pages of your local elected officials, politically engaged organizations, and or community groups. You can also join local community groups that champion for specific issues, or start your own. These are just some of the ways you can expand your influence. The more ways you remain civically engaged, the greater your impact.

## Stay Involved.

There are many ways you can get involved after an election to make sure the power of your voice and vote don't fall flat. After an election, whether the candidate of your choice wins or loses, you can still hold your representative accountable. You can remain engaged and pay attention to the decisions they're making on behalf of your community. All of your elected officials have contact information where you can send them a message, ask to meet up, and advocate for the issues that matter the most to you. You can also show up to the places where decisions are being made! We encourage you to look out for any community meetings held by your elected representatives at the state and local levels. You can come ready to listen and learn, or even to speak up or speak out.





# Conclusion.

We know this may feel overwhelming, and honestly at times it can be. We understand if you feel frustrated with the world of politics, and hold the belief that nothing will truly make a difference. Feeling this way is valid. But the reality is, nothing will really change if we all decide to not be civically engaged. Civil rights have never been won by giving up. As we talked about in earlier sections, so much effort has been deployed to disenfranchise the people's vote. This shows that voting has power. Not only does your vote have power, but the power of your voice is amplified when you stay informed, show up, and connect with your elected officials. Delaware is a small state which at times can lead to some sticky personal situations, ifykyk, lol. It also means there are boundless opportunities to make a meaningful difference in your community.

**Remember, the only one who can take away all your power is you!**



# Resources.

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