

## **The Art of Voting Competition - July 2021**

### **Winning Entry 1 - Kyle Ray**

#### **The Pragmatic Reality of Voting**

In democracies leaders do not represent the people, they represent voters. Potential representatives seeking election must win a majority of voters, not residents in their constituency. This is a critical distinction in the conversation about voting, because it means those who do not, or cannot, vote are not represented in the halls of power. We see examples of this in our own democracy. Younger citizens, who are less likely to vote compared to their elders, have issues they care about fall to the wayside. Issues like affordable housing are not critical for older citizens who have already found homes.

This dynamic is unsurprising. It is unwise to expect other citizens to fight for interests that are not their own when the people who stand to gain the most from change fail to even participate. When a demographic or bloc does not vote, it is easy for others to assume they are happy with the status quo, or to simply forget about them. By participating, voters force their issues into the spotlight. Candidates must voice their opinion and debate an issue, which in turn brings the matter into the public consciousness.

Even in cases where one is a part of a clear minority, when the candidates an individual supports have no chance of winning, voting is still critical. Such participation reminds those in power that their support is not unanimous. Additionally, voter preferences change over time, so a stance that was once unpopular in a state or locality may steadily gain traction, but any issue needs someone to promote it and popularity is irrelevant if no one votes on it.

There is a pragmatic reality to voter participation. Engagement is the primary means by which citizens can force change. Apathy allows for one's views to be easily sidelined by others. Even in situations where it is clear that an individual vote will have no effect on the outcome, the act itself serves to speak truth to power and potentially lay the groundwork for future change.