

# Why local elections are crucial to our daily lives

*By: Aidan Levinson*

Municipal elections are not “off-year” elections. Elections occur every year, a primary, and a general. Every odd numbered year, municipal offices are up for election. When we realize the importance of the work and control municipal, county and state governments have in our daily lives, we can elect a government we can be proud of.

For the past two years, I have worked hard at getting caring, intelligent and hardworking people into office who have our common interests as a community at heart. The candidates I worked with agree there are too many elected officials at the local level with partisan and self-serving agendas driving them.

Progress can be rolled back just as easily as it is made at the local level. Whether it be attempts to restrict students’ rights in schools, drawing electoral district maps to benefit one side of the aisle or defunding programs that benefit the community. The impact local government has on our daily lives is real and powerful.

It’s not just local government officials that are elected. All judges at the state-wide, county and magisterial district level are elected officials. These judges have the power to take away privileges afforded to us as American citizens such as driving licenses, our homes, our cars, or people’s children.

Every time you receive a speeding ticket in Pennsylvania, you appear before an elected magisterial district judge. Child custody, workplace rights, discrimination based on sex or gender cases are argued in front of elected Pennsylvania judges.

Last year the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania ruled the Pennsylvania congressional district map unconstitutional, which eventually led to a historic increase in the Pennsylvania Democratic congressional delegation.

The immense power and impact of local elected officials, legislative bodies and judges has not been fully realized by the voting populous as a whole. Community participation is paramount in the elections of local government officials and judges, and local government’s daily operations.

Services such as trash and snow removal, and protecting community resources are vital to living a happy and healthy life at home. At the county level, resources are available to provide a safety net for residents that can help ensure a better life in the long term. At the same time, education is overseen by school board directors.

Then why do municipal elections have such a low voter turnout? It comes down to a basic lack of knowledge of state, county, municipal and school government, and the aforementioned impact they have on us.

Being a high school student, I interact with students who can't vote yet, and when I ask them about local level political activities, the most common response I get is that they didn't know there was a state, county, municipal government and/or school board. But I don't blame them.

Current state-mandated curriculum does not require education about those types of offices and government organizations. I did not learn about local government and its inner-workings until I became politically involved, and conscious of the ramifications local government can produce.

Upon becoming involved, I was stunned at the lack of knowledge I had related to these offices. I have committed myself to educating others on these issues including, but not limited to, improving our vital infrastructure in the Lehigh Valley, funding and supporting small business, lifting up students and young people and jump-starting innovative programs to better the community.

Until we all recognize and embrace the benefit that can come from local government, we can't take decisive action to elect officials who share our values and community goals.

Washington, D.C. isn't the only place where laws are made and policies are developed that affect us. Get involved, get active, learn more about our local government organizations. I hope to see you out there pushing for change and voting in every election.

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