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Get Involved!

By Dr. James Dobson

There are many ways to participate in public policy
besides voting.

The midterm elections are coming UP later this year, offering Christians another prime opportunity to make their voices heard on matters of social significance.

I think it is a disgrace that half the believers in America aren't registered to vote, and of those who are, only half go to the polls. America is not ruled by a dictatorship; it is blessed to have a democratic form of government that Abraham Lincoln said was "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

The Constitution declares that you and I are the government. When we withhold our influence and participation, we yield by default to those who promote immoral and destructive policies.

We owe it to our children and to future generations to defend the principles in which we believe—the glorious freedom bought with the blood of so many brave young men and women. Shame on us for failing to do our duty to God and country.

It is unconscionable that so many Christians today have concluded that it is somehow immoral to "get political." I don't believe the Founding Fathers intended to exclude people of faith from the process. There is not a scrap of evidence to indicate such.

Because so few citizens vote, many of us are unaware that a small minority actually dominates national politics—not to mention local elections.

To illustrate, let's hypothesize that the country as a whole goes to the polls at the



rate of 10 out of every 20 people. If evangelicals stepped up their voting involvement to 13 out of every 20 percent, then instead of accounting for only 20 percent of the overall vote their proportion of the votes cast would increase to nearly 25 percent.

Did you know that if most of that additional 5 percent vote had been directed to the loser in four of the presidential elections that have taken place since World War II, it would have tipped the scales in favor of the defeated candidate?

More is at stake than merely the influence of chief-executive policy for a four-year term. Judicial appointments made by the president can directly impact our culture and our families for half a lifetime or more.

There are many ways to participate in public policy besides voting, of course. Letters and phone calls to our local officials, senators and congressional representatives make a difference. They need to hear from us.

When you write or call, keep it brief and restrict each letter to one subject or one piece of legislation. This makes it easier for the person to respond and for their staff to organize correspondence. If the letter is about a specific bill, identify it by name and number.

Also, be sure to make your letter personal. Form letters and postcards do have a place, but personal letters get more attention. Describe how the proposed bill or course of action would affect you, your family or your community. Give the essential background information as well.

Remember, elected officials receive thousands of letters of complaint and very few positive responses. If a public official says or does something you like, then respond to him or her with a quick note of appreciation, and by all means remember that democracy works best when the people make their wants and wishes known.

Finally, heed the words of the apostle Paul when he wrote, "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:1-3, NIV).

Tom Minnery, a Focus on the Family vice president and author of *Why You Can't Stay Silent*, shares a compelling case from a biblical perspective on why Christians must actively address social issues within the culture. For more information on this must-read book, go to www.family.org/resources.

Dr. James Dobson is founder and chairman of the board of the nonprofit organization Focus on the Family (Colorado Springs, CO 80995; or www.family.org). To read past columns in Charisma by James Dobson, log on at www.charismamag.com/dobson.

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