



Defending Democracy

By Lynne Ferral

“... Many of the basic freedoms we have enjoyed for years are in danger as we face this election cycle ...”

A clear message that has been topping the headlines lately is the danger in which we find our democracy. So many democratic norms are being shattered. We need to pay attention and stand up for democratic ideals—democratic with a small “d”. Voting ensures that our rights and freedoms will be protected.

Voting begins with those fresh-faced high school students turning 18 before the next election. Impressing upon them to become informed voters is so important. They become dismayed when they are told they must align themselves with one of the major parties or they are excluded from voting in the primaries. Ironic that their first chance to vote may find them excluded from voting. How many registered voters in Pennsylvania find themselves in the same boat? The answer is over a million. Over one million Pennsylvania voters are excluded from voting in our primaries. It just does not seem fair, but that happens with closed primaries.

Rights worth voting for

The right to control our own health care is being threatened. How many Pennsylvanians in both parties felt a sense of loss when their basic right to control their own bodies was stripped away when *Roe v. Wade* was overturned? Even many of those women **AND** men opposed to *Roe* for years recognize that a woman should be able to choose how to handle her own health concerns.

The right to vote is being eroded. Laws that obstruct our voting rights continue to be introduced. These include unnecessarily limited voter ID rules and hard-to-understand absentee/mail voting rules. The act of “curing” ballots of simple mistakes would enable many more votes to be counted.

The right to feel safe in our schools, churches, shopping malls, grocery stores, and music festivals is threatened by the explosion of gun sales and those who feel that violence and killing is the way to solve problems. Increased background checks for gun sales and raising the age to buy certain guns are commonsense ways to increase our right to feeling safe outside of our homes, which do not infringe on law-abiding gun owners.

Freedoms worth fighting for

Many of the basic freedoms we have enjoyed for years are in danger as we face this election cycle. Our freedom to speak without being attacked by those who disagree. Our freedom to perform civic duties, such as being a poll worker, is under fire. Our freedom to love the one we choose faces harassment. Our freedom to practice our religion in a safe house of worship is in danger.

Pennsylvanians need to pull together, recognize the dangers of losing our basic rights and freedoms, and **vote** for the candidates who care about the issues that are important to us and who share

our values. Take the time to learn where the candidates stand on issues. Democracy depends on the participation of its citizens, and the more Pennsylvanians who stand up and fight for our rights and freedoms, the better our state will be. Being an informed voter is our best shot at preserving the precious democracy we so love and deserve.



EMPOWERING VOTERS. DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.

The League of Women Voters of Bucks County is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to providing voter education and services and advocating for issues. We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate.

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