

This is “The Land of the Free.”

Ladda Lanouette



I believe that voting is a very important obligation of everyone who is eligible. I always push my friends and family to register to vote and make sure they get out to the polls on Election Day. It doesn't matter to me if they vote Democrat, Republican, or Independent, as long as they vote from their hearts

and vote to make our community and our country a better place for all of us.

Voting is a privilege and a cornerstone of our democracy. As Benjamin Franklin left the Constitutional Convention on September 18, 1787, someone from the crowd shouted out to him: “Well, doctor, what have we got?” and Franklin responded: “A Republic, if you can keep it.” If we as citizens don't exercise this right to vote, we are in danger of losing it.

The electoral process and the debates really fascinate me and I always watch the polls with great interest. I am hooked on the political TV shows. With the assistance of my teachers and counselors at the Methuen Adult Learning Center, I learned to read and write English and now am extremely proud to be a U.S. citizen and able to participate in the electoral process. To show my gratitude, I volunteer to hold up a sign outside the polling place for my favorite candidate, whether there is rain, sleet, or snow.

If I was back in my home country of Thailand, I could vote, but the corrupt people in power would always be bribing the citizens in the countryside to make sure they voted for their candidate. Early in 2007, there was a military coup in Thailand. I was scared at first and I worried about what might happen to my family and friends back home. Thank the Lord I live here in the land of

the free where I believe that a military coup could never happen.

Strategies to Increase Voting

I've noticed that a lot of the young people don't care about politics or voting in elections. I think this is a real shame. If the younger voters don't get involved in our democratic process, we could lose our Republic as Benjamin Franklin feared, or our United States could turn into a country run by the military like happened in Thailand. I think that if young people are encouraged to get involved in their communities by assisting at neighborhood polling places, and maybe driving elderly and disabled voters to the polls, there is a good chance they will grow up to be enthusiastic and informed voters. Younger people might also help get their parents involved. Many of these parents do not know English, but that should not keep them from participating in our democracy.

If we make Election Day a national holiday, I think many more people would be able to vote. Election Day is already a holiday in some states, and just recently, Rep. John Conyers of Michigan and a member of the Congressional Black Caucus introduced a bill in Congress to make election day a national holiday called “Democracy Day.”

It is important that everybody votes because there are so many close races, and every vote counts. Many people will stay at home and say that their one vote doesn't count. But our democracy can only work if EVERYBODY participates. I believe that although our voting and electoral process may not be perfect, it's the best in the world! I know that along with the power of my vote comes a great responsibility. I'm ready!

Ladda Lanouette is originally from Thailand. She is currently working on her GED at the Methuen Adult Learning Center in Methuen, MA.