

MINORITY RULES!

One of the best things about living in a democracy is that everyone legally allowed to cast a vote has a voice. I heard much too often while campaigning that one vote, their vote, does not matter. Every election from the local school board trustee to a US Senator can be lost or won by just one vote, even if millions of votes were cast in a single contest. Our presidential elections utilize the Electoral College as a means of electing our US president where it is possible and it has happened that the plurality of votes was greater for one candidate, however lost due to the unique process of the Electoral College. That is an altogether different issue that may need to be corrected in the future.

So why is it approximately half the eligible persons who could vote and have a voice in the democratic process choose not to? You might be as surprised as I was to find out the percentage of eligible voters that do determine the outcome of elections.

In the California 5th Assembly District, the one I live in, and most likely where this op-ed will appear, there are 463,000 residents. Approximately 319,000 persons are 18 years of age or older and legally allowed to vote. 157,000 votes were cast for either Frank Bigelow or Rico Oller. That is about 49.2 percent of the eligible voters. And only 25.7 percent of all eligible voters decided the outcome in this 2012 general election contest (Bigelow). The primary voter turnout is considerably less with even a smaller minority of voters deciding the eventual outcome of who would become our elected representative.

This is somewhat typical for a presidential general election. The state, on average, has 55 percent eligible voter participation. Gubernatorial elections fair slightly worse state wide (44% in 2010). Our district, the 5th AD saw a high of 75 % (656 votes) in Alpine County to a low of 46% (40,325 votes) in Madera County in the 2012 general election.

Our democratic process, which every person's vote counts equally and all are free to pursue self-political determination, is the envy of the majority of persons who inhabit this planet. To ensure our voter rights are upheld and in no way diminished, 5 of our 26 US Constitution Amendments were enacted. It does not work unless all persons eligible to vote participate in this great democracy our founding fathers and others after them had the fore site to ensure the equally and access for all.