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Promoting Patriotism Through Service

Americans are world-famous for their unwavering patriotism. They proudly display the love they have for the red, white, and blue. They strongly support their hard-working troops, even those that have served in the past. In a study conducted by World Values Survey, they found that on a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being most patriotic, the United States of America scored the highest with a 3.92. ("World Values Survey") This evaluation shows how much Americans value their country and their freedoms. However, being patriotic doesn't mean blindly following the words of the government and its leaders just because they are in charge. Sometimes, being patriotic means questioning what America's leaders are doing, and opposing them if they're steering the country into a direction you don't approve of. Leaders are not infallible and it is the duty of the citizens of the country to let them know when they are wrong. The Declaration of Independence states, "But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security." Those that have the ability to take action have the responsibility to take action, and as citizens capable of voting, we can do just that. In the United States of America, its citizens are blessed with the amount of freedoms given to them by their government. In addition, Americans are lucky to be able to choose to enter into the military and not be forced to serve for a certain amount of time like so many other countries. It is a testament to the effectiveness of our democratic government. At the moment, there is no required service for citizens of the U.S.; however, there are several simple things that could easily be made a requirement, including voting, becoming educated about our country, and becoming an

upstanding citizen by means of community service, in order to promote nationalism in the country.

Voting is inherent to our democratic way of life. It allows us the opportunity to make changes in our government and to make it more efficient and better employed to help its citizens. Voting is one of the most important rights and duty you have as an American citizen. Much of the world does not share the same rights and privileges that Americans tend to take for granted. Many in other nations live under oppressive governments who choose their leaders and their laws just for their own personal benefit. Even so, on average, only 49.9% of eligible voters actually cast a ballot based on numbers collected over the past 48 years. (“infoplease”)

Many people believe that their vote doesn't really matter in the long run, but in reality, it really does count. Those non-voters have the potential to sway an entire election, but they don't realize that. If the right to vote no longer existed, the country would not be able to survive as a democratic nation; it would convert into a completely totalitarian society. By not voting, you give away your right to influence the government overall. More importantly, however, not voting takes away the "will of the majority that governs this country, but replaces it with the will of the minority" (Smithstein).

Voting in any type of election, from local elections to Presidential primaries, provides an important way to voice your opinions regarding elected leaders and overall policies; voting also helps you decide your own future by electing a person who might reflect your own views. The ability to vote exists as one of the most cherished Constitutional Rights that many fought for, marched for, and died for over the centuries (Smithstein).

However, in order for a voter to intelligently cast his or her ballot with integrity and wisdom, one must become educated about not only who is running in an election and about their certain policies and beliefs, but also in how government itself works. This knowledge is vital to being a contributing citizen and voter of the United States. In order for immigrants to become citizens of the United States, they must first be tested on their knowledge of this country, its history, and how it operates. Why should the same not be done for those who are already citizens and wish to become voters? The best voter is an educated voter.

While there are many Americans who take to time to provide service to others in their community, there are many more that do not. Community service is essential to the well being of this nation. As President Barack Obama said,

“When you choose to serve —whether it’s your nation, your community or simply your neighborhood —you are connected to that fundamental American ideal that we want life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness not just for ourselves, but for all Americans. That’s why it’s called the American dream.” ("Office of the President-Elect")

Service improves the lives of others as well as giving one a better sense of self. There is so much in this country that could be accomplished if only people got engaged in their communities and help out others that may be in need. If this were to be a required service for citizens, then it would vastly improve the lives of perhaps the entire country. With the news being filled with horrible news including, racism, war, and violence, it’s important to remember that life doesn’t have to be that awful if people work together and better the nation.

Voting, becoming educated about The United States of America, and performing community service, are several possible ways that could be used in order to promote nationalism in this country. Voting is a civic duty that citizens must be required to perform in order to take part in how the country is governed. It is one of the most important obligations that an American has. For a voter to wisely cast his or her ballot, he or she must become educated about not only the candidates running in an election and about their specific policies and values, but also in how the American democratic government works. In addition, serving others in the form of community service helps other people to realize their full potential when they otherwise may not have been able to. While required service for American citizens is not currently in effect, perhaps government should consider implementing one of these ideas in order to promote patriotism in the U.S. and welfare of its people.

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