

# DIY government

## Voting essential to maintain democracy

Today, the 2012 election cycle comes to an end. With it, thousands of politicians and laws will be added to our nation's lexicon thanks to the voices of millions of citizens. Amongst those voices should be University students, expressing their personal beliefs and ideologies in hopes of creating their vision of the . Unfortunately, due to a marked difference in the tenor of college-aged excitement about President Barack Obama compared to 2008, and in conjunction with historically low rates of youth engagement, the reality is that far too few of us will make it to the polls this time around. Plenty of solutions have been proffered to fix this, from Jay-Z and Bruce Springsteen campaigning with the President to Lena Dunham of "Girls" likening the first time voting to losing one's virginity. The simple fact of the matter, however, is that voting is an essential form of participation in the democratic process and those of age must participate in order for the system to succeed.

People should realize that when they vote they are not only choosing a candidate for the next two, four or six years nor are they merely choosing which bonds to renew or to impose. More importantly, they are forcing politicians and fellow citizens to consider their demographic and the issues important to them. Women's rights, marriage equality, fair trade, unemployment, the rising cost of education and the increasing tax burdens cast upon our generation and those to come are just a few of the issues that appeal to students more than others.

By voting we are using the voice given to each of us by our democratic process, and that right is under fire in some states. Check your voter registration card to see where you're registered to vote — polling places are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Nov. 6. Be sure to bring a driver's license or another form of photo identification, such as an MCard, U.S. passport or other government-issued ID. If you don't have a photo ID, it is possible to sign an affidavit at the polls to affirm your identity. It's necessary to bring your voter registration card or a utility bill if your form of identification does not include your current address.

Apathy, disillusionment and the feeling that one vote doesn't matter are all regularly cited as reasons to remain at home on Election Day. All these arguments posit that an individual vote is insignificant and therefore not worth

casting. This line of thinking strays when it assumes that democracies are reflections of individual desires rather than the culmination of our collective action. America is not just built by presidents or ballot proposals, campaigns or special interests; our nation is built by all of us — for all of us.

Often people forget this. They become more concerned with how their particular brand of politics reflects upon themselves and fail to consider how their political beliefs — protesting through inaction — reflects on their country itself. This creates public and private forms of non-participation. The silent plurality of non-voters finds itself with nothing to say about the far-removed notions of the political world. This inaction then becomes the cause of their disenfranchisement since politicians, lawmakers and lobbyists can only interpret the words and actions of voters: they simply do not have the means to interpret the silence. If you have a grievance, you must air it or fix it yourself. Since the issues we face as a country are greater than any one of us, it will take all of us to solve them.

Today the 2012 election cycle ends and a new one begins. The only change we'll see is the change we initiate. Let us leave our indelible mark on the history books so that tomorrow we may say we started to create the country we wanted today.