

Solutions to the Uneducated Voter

Every election year, different organizations put out voting guides that provide a basic understanding of candidates and their policies. They're simple and easy to comprehend, giving people a good place to start in the political world. Despite these jumping-off points, many people still avoid educating themselves or simply follow the beliefs of their friends and families.

Apart from voting guides, I rarely see other resources on the basics of politics. It's assumed students will learn enough about it in school to be prepared for elections when they're old enough to vote. A lot of my friends who have learned about politics through schooling don't really feel prepared to vote. Many people just pick the party they agree with the most without giving it much thought as they weren't taught to do more.

More politically aware people complain about this but rarely present a good solution. Obviously there isn't a one-size-fits-all way of educating people on politics, but apart from individual awareness and spreading knowledge to our friends and peers, it doesn't seem like we're doing a whole lot.

Truthfully, the solution starts with educating kids when they're younger allowing them to watch the political atmosphere grow as they do. But it's difficult to explain the basics to a grade schooler. I was homeschooled growing up. My parents didn't talk about politics very often apart from the occasional mention of candidates in conversation. I remember the 2008 election in snippets of maps and red and blue states I didn't understand at the time.

I didn't know that much about politics until the 2016 campaign season. I knew the basics (democrat vs. republican) but I hadn't seen the arguments for either in action as I was too young during the previous elections. Since I hadn't been taught much about the American political system at the time, I had a unique opportunity to learn through watching it in real time, with all of its flaws on display.

Many oppose letting kids watch politics without a cheery sugar coating of how it's supposed to work, but letting kids see it's flaws in practice is important and allows them to form ideas through personal experience. Sheltering kids from the realities of politics only leads to disappointment later.

Homeschooling all kids up through middle school isn't the solution to uneducated voters, but exposing kids to politics outside of a school setting is important. Most of my friends from homeschool settings are the ones most active in protest and activism who reliably do their research on candidates, and help educate other people around them who didn't have the same opportunity.

The exclusion of teens from political platforms and constant ridicule of young voters unable to make it to the poles needs to be discussed more readily, as those are the circumstances which make later generations less knowledgeable about the system that dictates every aspect of their lives. I hope in the future we better educate others to give them opportunities of learning only some of us received.