

## Decisions Are Made By Those Who Show Up By Austin Webster

“My vote doesn’t matter.”

This phrase is uttered over and over by thousands of people each election year. It is used to justify complacency, ignorance, and outright laziness. It’s a copout used when someone is pressed about being engaged, knowing the issues, and taking a stand.

It’s a lie. Your vote matters.

While it’s technically true that no major election in U.S. history has been won by a single vote, some have come close. In 2015, a Mississippi statehouse race ended in a tie and the winner was selected by drawing straws. During this year’s presidential primaries, Senator Bernie Sanders won a county in Massachusetts by a single vote—a symbolic victory that would help continue the Senator’s momentum through the primary cycle. While ultimately unsuccessful in securing the Democratic nomination for president, Sander’s candidacy pushed the Democratic Party to adopt its most progressive platform in history and brought Secretary Hillary Clinton to the left on a number of important policies.

In one of my favorite clips from *The Newsroom*, popular national news anchor Will McAvoy (portrayed by Jeff Daniels) pointedly asks: if liberals are so smart, why do they lose so frequently? The answer is simple. Turnout.

Sanders’ campaign was consistently heralded as “unprecedented” due to the high level of engagement and dedication of his supporters. They frequently showed up in the thousands for his rallies and speeches. His grassroots support broke the mold for small dollar donations and many political observers here in California expected a record primary turnout. That didn’t happen.

Of the 24,783,789 eligible voters in California, only 17,915,053 are registered, and of that number, only 8,548,301 participated. In other terms, 34.49% of California’s eligible voters (about 21.91% of California’s total population) made the decisions for everyone else.

I reference the impact of the Sanders campaign on the Democratic platform because it represents a solution to a growing problem in national politics. In 2010, people who felt their vote “didn’t matter” allowed the Tea Party to hijack the Republican Party. This subsequently led to the least productive Congress in history and a rightward gravitational pull for the Democratic Party. Why did Democrats move to the right? Because the left wasn’t turning out in high enough numbers to maintain the momentum created in 2008.

The center is where elections are won or lost, and that’s decided by turnout. If progressives want to continue the work that’s been done over the last eight years, they must vote. Likewise, if true conservatives want their party back, they have to get serious at the ballot box.

Decisions are made by those who show up.

Register to vote. Show up on November 8 and every election thereafter.