

Election Day Looms, Please Vote!

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Election Day is next Tuesday, November 8th. I go every year, usually on the way to work, to vote. I walk into the polling location, walk right up, check in and immediately vote. The whole process infuriates me. Why? Because I NEVER have to wait in line. I would love to walk into the polling location and have to wait for fifteen minutes to vote because of the line. In all the years I've lived here, I doubt that I've ever had more than two people, if that, in front of me. Which means that people are not getting out and voting.

This has been a somewhat contentious election year and I'm trying to be nice here. It's been ugly all the way through from some of the candidates all the way down the line. I don't even want to look at Facebook or other social media because it's become so hateful and spiteful and just downright ugly. Many people obviously have very strong feelings about the election, some quietly so, others not so quiet. Speaking up on social media is one thing, but talk is cheap and now days easy. But we all need to follow through and vote!

Some people will claim that their vote doesn't matter. Others will claim that the voting is rigged. None of these claims have any merit! In the August primary, we had a race that was decided by 21 votes. 21! Total voter turnout in the August primary was 15.65%. That is an embarrassment! All it would have taken was for two dozen more voters to change the outcome of that race. We've had races that were determined, literally, by the flip of a coin. I know everyone has an opinion and the only place and time it really matters is when you mark that ballot at the polling place!

As for the whole rigged election claim, I don't even know where to start. I wish those folks that claim elections are rigged would get involved in the process. The people that work in those polling places are our friends and neighbors. They put in long hours and work hard to make sure that everything goes as required. Our county clerk, Rebecca Bossemeyer, is an absolute professional that spends months getting ready for these elections. I've had the privilege to help behind the scenes with the elections and trust me, everyone takes what they do very seriously. To say that elections are rigged is a slap in the face of every man and woman who puts in a lot of hours for the process!

Ultimately it comes down to our responsibility as citizens to be present and involved. I hear a lot of people making a lot of noise about being a citizen of this country. If you take that seriously, then you need to be out there voting at EVERY election. In some countries, if you don't show up and vote, you are fined. I'm sure that this would go over well in the US. Maybe we should pass a law that if you don't vote at one election, you're prohibited in voting at the next. Wouldn't that shake things up? I can hear the wailing of protests already!

Yes, I talk a lot about voting and I sometimes think that nobody is listening. But I talk about it because it is very important. I can guarantee that you and I will disagree on at least one thing on that ballot. But that's okay because our democracy only works if we can find compromise and compromise starts with a ballot. I may not agree with your vote, but I will defend your right to cast that vote to the very end! As long as you get out and vote!

We have a lot of important issues and races on the ballot. The more voters we have, the better the indication that the public's desire will be represented. So be a part of this democracy; get out and vote!