

In early American history we learn about James Otis's famous phrase "No taxation without representation." From 1765-1783 American settlers fought for freedom from Great Britain's rule. For thirteen years, the amount of time I spent attending school, early settlers fought so their voices could be heard. Despite this victory, not everyone was given the right to vote. Laws were created to limit and discriminate who was allowed to vote.

The exclusion of women from voting continued for over a century following the Revolutionary War. One of the reasons that anti-suffragists, those against women voting, used to justify the limiting of women to vote was the idea that women did not have time to be informed voters. Women would not know the political issues of the day and therefore would not make sound choices

Why does being an informed voter matter? It is not merely an exercise in civic duty. When we cast our votes, we declare our right to influence how we are governed. The individuals we elect to office shape our future. There are major issues that will affect my life in the near future such as student debt relief, climate change initiatives, breaching the Snake River Hydroelectric Dams, securing the border, taxes on gas, minimum wage increases, and much more. It is my responsibility to know where each candidate stands on these issues. My future will be impacted by the laws that are passed.

Columbia Basin's history illustrates the consequences of legislative choices. In 1943, work began in Richland, WA to produce the first nuclear bomb. Overnight, a small farm community was transformed into a busy town, forever altering the social, economic, and environmental landscape of the region. The choices our leaders make have lasting impacts.

The age-old question still lingers: does one vote truly make a difference? The significance of a single vote became real to me in sixth grade during an important school bond vote in the Pasco School District. My brother was attending McLoughlin Middle School that had over 30 portables. The school experienced major problems due to overcrowding. Our family decided to help pass out fliers to encourage voters to vote yes for the two new middle schools. My siblings and I ran from door to door handing out hundreds of fliers. The bond passed with a margin of just seven votes. This experience taught me the importance of being actively engaged in politics and that every vote does matter. Just like James Otis, I also want to actively participate in the democratic process, so that my voice can be heard.