**Vote This Year – and Every Year - to Fulfill our Civic Duty**

By Debra Mulé

In less than two weeks, the residents of Nassau County will join Americans in every corner of our nation – as well as citizens living abroad and the men and women of our armed forces – in casting their ballots in pivotal 2024 elections.

Yes, the federal elections – for President, U.S. Senate, and the House of Representatives – have captured many of the headlines and much of our attention. However, we must not lose sight of this year’s crucial elections for the New York State Senate and Assembly, as well as a special Town Council election in the Fifth Councilmanic District and Proposition 1 on the back of each ballot.

The outcomes of these races will impact our lives and the issues that matter most to us, and because of recent changes in New York State law, it is easier than ever to be an active participant in the democracy.

If you are not yet registered to vote, you have until the first day of early voting – which is Saturday, Oct. 26 – to register by visiting <https://elections.ny.gov/register-vote> and completing your application online. If you register on Oct. 26, you will have the option to vote by affidavit ballot that same day at any early voting site.

Early voting will continue through Sunday, Nov. 3 at 27 sites across Nassau County. Visit [www.nassauvotes.com](http://www.nassauvotes.com) or call 516-571-VOTE (8683) to get the full list of early voting sites and hours of operations. If you prefer to vote on Election Day, vote at your normal polling place, which you can confirm at <https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>.

An active and informed electorate is the backbone of representative government – and your vote is your voice in the process that will chart the course of our future. With Election Day fast approaching, I know that the intensity of this campaign has been exhausting. However, there are ways we can break it down and filter it all, one step at a time.

I encourage you to do all you can to cut through the noise on social media, campaign advertisements and partisan media outlets so that you can get a real picture of who is running to represent your community in public office. Community news outlets like the Herald are excellent resources for learning about candidates’ platforms, and I encourage you to read multiple outlets to gain a fuller perspective. It is also helpful to look closely at the endorsements and financial support that each candidate has received so that you can match that up against your values and priorities, and nonpartisan organizations like the League of Women Voters are also excellent resources for straightforward presentations on where the candidates stand.

As you might have suspected by this point, I am passionate about voting, and I believe that foregoing this right would be an abdication of our civic duty and a disservice to all who fought so tirelessly to expand that right to all American citizens. Remember that women were not granted suffrage until the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. It was not until 1964 that poll taxes – a common tool for disenfranchising Black Americans in the Jim Crow south – were banned; a year later, in 1965, Black Americans of all races and genders were fully enfranchised through the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

These actions were major triumphs in the push to realize the promise of freedom and equality at the core of the post-Civil War 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, and the road to that day was marked by tremendous battles that continue to this day.

The advocates who courageously raised their voices and stood firm to bend the arc of history toward justice sacrificed far too much for us to take what they did for granted. They often faced violence and terrorism at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan and other hate-mongering foes of equality and shed their blood and tears as they fearlessly waged this battle. Far too many of these heroic leaders lost their lives in the pursuit of a greater and more perfect union.

We must never forget what they gave of themselves to secure the right that we are about to exercise – and may each of us honor their legacy by casting our ballot in an election that will shape our collective future.

*Debra Mulé, of Freeport, was first elected to the Nassau County Legislature in 2017. She represents the 6th Legislative District.*