

# Operation Wildfire: Good Things Happen When Republicans Vote

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Issue 13

August 30, 2021

## The Right to Vote

Harvard economist Greg Mankiw wrote “If you really don’t know enough to cast an intelligent vote, you should be eager to let your more-informed neighbors make the decision.” If you agree, then it doesn’t matter to you who will sit on our courts, serve as township supervisors or borough council members and lead our school district? But, like making investments or undergoing surgery, the election of government officials can have serious consequences. In fact, we’re seeing those consequences play out every day on our television screens.

But you are informed. Operation Wildfire has provided, and will continue to provide, information on the candidates and the issues.

Because in Pennsylvania, there is no such thing as an “off-year” election. Every election matters. On November 2, there is much at stake. Your vote is about the future – yours, your children’s and your grandchildren’s. And that’s why Operation Wildfire has been providing information to help you learn more about the issues and the candidates. You’ve heard it before but we’ll say it again – in November you will select individuals whose actions may impact your daily life more than any other election.

If you opt not to vote on November 2:

- Your neighbors will elect judges to sit on our Supreme, Superior, Commonwealth, Common Pleas and Magisterial District courts. Will they choose judges who will interpret the law or activist judges who will legislate from the bench?
- Those neighbors will decide who will run our townships and boroughs. Our supervisors and council members enact and enforce ordinances, set budgets, approve expenditures, hire employees and contractors and levy and collect taxes. They also appoint volunteers to various commissions.
- And, your more-informed neighbors will select new school directors who will make decisions about what our children learn, and establish policies and regulations by which our schools are governed – from school calendars, mask and vaccine requirements to Critical Race Theory instruction.

A Portland State University study found that fewer than 15 percent of eligible voters were turning out to vote for judges, mayors, council members, school boards and other local offices. Low turnout means that important local issues are determined by a limited group of voters, making a single vote even more statistically meaningful. A Stanford University study revealed similar results.

How has Centre County fared?

In Municipal General Elections, voter turnout has ranged from 27% to 30%. Low turnout, yet it is in the Municipal Elections that we choose those who will have the most direct impact on our daily lives – judges, township supervisors, borough council members and school directors.

The real numbers: In the May 18, 2021 Municipal Primary, Democrats cast 13,939 ballots; Republicans cast 13,960. In November, even more Centre County Democrats will cast their ballots for their candidates, especially those running for Judge. And, remember, as of August 24, 2021, there are 44,006 registered Democrats in Centre County and 42,162 registered Republicans. Registered Republican, Independent and Unaffiliated voters cannot be complacent.

During his presidency, Abraham Lincoln spoke often of the importance of government being of, for and by the people. Lincoln argued that it is the voters who ensure the government reflects their desires and functions according to the Constitution.

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Despite Lincoln's appeal, many people today fail to appreciate or acknowledge their role in shaping the government. Operation Wildfire will provide only a few of the many reasons to vote:

## 1. **The Pennsylvania Courts.**

The left prefers to stack the courts with judicial activists determined to insert their priorities into law by twisting the Constitution beyond all recognition.

As you know from your civics classes, the power of the state legislature to draw congressional districts flows from the U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Section 4, Clause 1. However, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ordered a redrawing of the state's 18 congressional districts in early 2018, saying that the prior districts amounted to an unconstitutional gerrymander.

In an earlier issue paper about this year's Supreme Court race, Operation Wildfire reminded you that when the General Assembly and the Governor couldn't agree on new district borders, the decision ended up before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Despite existing law, the court decided that they would just redraw the lines themselves and implement the new congressional districts. Effectively they acted as the legislature and "made law", rather than doing what was their job of "interpreting the law".

This year's redistricting is likely to end up with the same problem. As you know, Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution requires that members of the U.S. House of Representatives be apportioned to the states on the basis of population. Federal law requires that each Representative's congressional district has substantially equal population.

Pennsylvania will lose one seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, moving from 18 to 17 seats, and will have one less electoral vote, as a result of the 2020 Census. The Democrats in the Pennsylvania General Assembly have already told the Pennsylvania Supreme Court they should plan to redraw the lines BEFORE the legislature has even attempted to do so on their own. And, remember, lines will be redrawn for the General Assembly as well, both the Pennsylvania Senate and House. There is much at stake in this year's judicial elections.

Don't allow the left to destroy your Constitutional rights and traditional values. Vote for Judges who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench:

Pennsylvania Supreme Court	Judge Kevin Brobson
Pennsylvania Superior Court	Megan Sullivan
Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court	Judge Drew Crompton and Stacy Wallace

You'll learn about the Judges running for retention in our September 6<sup>th</sup> Operation Wildfire edition.

## 2. **Change Begins in Our Community.**

The fight for social change often begins small in our communities, shaping policy from the ground up. This year, we'll vote for leaders who will influence parks and recreation, public transportation, safety (police and fire departments), school rules, regulations and curriculum (education), taxes and public works. Make your voice heard and help to ensure that the changes you want really do happen.

## 3. **Elected leaders are chosen by those who vote.**

As we said earlier, voter turnout is historically low in Municipal Elections. These elections are usually called "off-year" elections because they happen between presidential elections and presidential mid-term elections. If you don't vote, your voice with elected leaders is diminished. When you do, your vote keeps our elected officials accountable.

## 4. **Many people fought and died for your right to vote.**

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From the American Revolution up to and including 1971 when 18 year olds were granted the right to vote, people have fought, and some have died, to ensure your right to vote. There are still people throughout the world who are unable to fully exercise this freedom, like the Muslim minority in India or the limited choices available to voters in Cuba, Venezuela and Russia. Afghanistan? What will happen there?

The right to vote is fundamental to our Constitutional Republic. In fact, five Amendments to the United States Constitution protect voting rights:

- The Fourteenth Amendment limits restrictions on voting rights that place a “severe burden” on voters. Often considered one of the most consequential amendments, it addresses citizenship rights and equal protection under the law.
- The Fifteenth Amendment prohibits any state or municipal authority from denying the right to vote on the basis of race, color or previous status as a slave.
- The Nineteenth Amendment granted citizens the right to vote regardless of gender.
- The Twenty-Fourth Amendment prohibits the use of poll taxes or any other tax to deny citizens the right to vote.
- The Twenty-Sixth Amendment set the legal voting age at eighteen.

While the Voting Rights Act addresses specific issues concerning the right to vote, the United States Constitution guarantees the protection of the right to vote of certain classes of individual. We'll address more about our Constitution in our September 13<sup>th</sup> Operation Wildfire edition.

## 5. **Every decision made after an election has an impact on your life.**

Have you watched the news lately? Elections have consequences. That's why it's important to know the issues and the candidates so that you can make an informed decision when you vote. And, remember, when you cast your ballot, you are voting for the future – yours, your children's, your grandchildren's and your great grandchildren's. Vote wisely.

Many Americans feel, for the sake of our country, an obligation to pay taxes or to volunteer for military service. Is the obligation to vote similar? Operation Wildfire believes it is. In the coming weeks, Wildfire will direct you to websites where you can learn even more about candidates on the November 2nd ballot. In the meantime, we've listed some important dates to add to your calendar:

### **Important Dates to Remember**

October 18    Last Day to Register to Vote

October 26    Last Day to Apply for a Mail-In or Civilian Absentee Ballot

November 2    Last Day for the Centre County Board of Elections to Receive Voted Mail-In or Civilian Absentee Ballots (must be received by 8:00 p.m.)

November 2    Municipal Primary Election  
7:00 a.m. – Polls Open  
8:00 p.m. – Polls Close (you must be in line by 8:00 p.m. in order to vote)

Participating in elections is one of our key freedoms. No matter what you believe or whom you support, it is important to exercise your rights. We look forward to seeing you at the polls!

Sources: The Boston Globe, CompulsoryVoting.org, The Stanford Daily, ballotpedia.org, National Geographic Resource Library, Civics-Online, Centre County Votes, Election Policy, Constitution of the United States