



LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

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LINCOLN-DOUGLAS

ADVANCED BRIEF

Resolved: In a democracy, voting ought to be compulsory.

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Topic Analysis

This topic analysis will seek to illuminate this question and some of the others that surround the resolution, Resolved: in a democracy, voting ought to be compulsory. The first part of the analysis will provide an overview the resolution and some of its core questions, which is followed up by affirmative and negative strategies open to debaters under this topic.

When the United States was founded and the framers of the constitution were debating the means of choosing our elected representatives, the decision was made that a free will voting system was best. Each citizen had the duty to vote but there was no obligation to do such. Freedom went both ways. To have freedom to vote also meant the freedom to not vote. For many decades, voting turnout held high and the general population was content to vote. In many cities, voting was considered a holiday. Although bars and taverns were closed on voting day, citizens found ways to celebrate the occasion. However, after the Civil War, when all states and areas switched to a secret ballot rather than open ballots, we saw a change in the voting rate. Turnout rates have decreased to the point where 50% is considered historic and monumental.”

This trend is mirrored throughout the world in other democracies that have voluntary voting systems. In these nations, increasingly smaller segments of the population are doing a majority of the voting. This shapes the results of the elections and the future of their nations to benefit those segments that vote. This is an impediment to equal representation principles inherent in democracy and possibly threatens the democratic legitimacy of these nations.

Meanwhile, 31 nations around the globe have chosen a different route and have mandated that voting is compulsory. In these nations, voter turnout often remains over 90%. As good as these levels seem, there is a question of freedom. These laws beg the question; is it legitimate for democracies to require political participation when the right to participate or not participate is a core principle of democracy?

The resolution asks us to consider whether, in a democracy, voting ought to be compulsory. An internet search immediate reveals that a large portion of the literature surrounding the topic area centers on the term of art, “compulsory voting.” Compulsory voting as discussed in the literature, refers to voting laws used in about 31 nations around the world that attempt to compel some level of mandatory voting in national elections.

Most authors point out that compulsory voting does not typically refer to voting laws that require citizens to cast a vote. Instead, most laws that are referred to as compulsory voting in the literature are actually compulsory turnout laws that mandate citizens appear at the voting station. Once they are there, they can abstain from voting. This is in addition to a number of exemptions that several nations allow for that cover everything from illness to religious objections. In essence, most literature that affirmatives will be relying upon that refers to compulsory voting are not necessarily relevant within the resolution. A persuasive argument can be made that evidence touting the success of current compulsory voting systems are actually negative ground.

If the intent of the affirmative is to be able to defend current systems that enforce compulsory turnout as opposed to actual compulsory voting, the framers of the resolution would have used the term of art compulsory voting. Instead, the framers chose to state that voting ought to be compulsory. This clarifies the grey area and clearly delineates that compulsory voting is affirmative ground and all other options that stop short, such as compulsory turnout, are negative ground.

However, affirmatives wanting to avoid negative links to tyranny and autonomy arguments can try to win that using the term of art to divide ground is best because this will allow them to say that citizens are not forced to vote, which means their liberty or free choice is never compromised.

Framework Ideas

The stasis point in the resolution will be between democratic performance and legitimacy and the individual's right to autonomy and free choice. Democratic legitimacy is a core value because the resolution is limited by the phrase, "in democracy." This means that any policies, rights, or obligations that contradict democratic principles and legitimacy are outside of the resolution. This discussion is framed by the low voter turnout that is pervasive amongst nations with voluntary voting regimes, particularly in the United States. Some political scientists and pundits state that low voter turnout is a threat to democratic functioning and legitimacy because democracies rely upon the input of the people to ensure that the will of the people is being represented and legislated.

Currently, a number of age and class factors are increasingly determinant of which segments of the population are turning up at elections and selecting leaders. In turn, the voice of these narrow segments and their interests are embodied in the elected representatives, who in turn pander to their interests in an effort to seek reelection, further distancing nonvoters from the political process. Some contend that compulsory voting regimes are necessary to combat low voter turnout and increase political participation.

Key Arguments

Advocates of compulsory voting believe that it is necessary to improve voter turnout and ensure democratic legitimacy for several reasons. First, proponents believe that compulsory voting increases political participation because it codifies the norm that voting is important. Second, compulsory voting is supposed deradicalize the political process by forcing politicians to gain the acceptance of apathetic or disinterested citizens. It is also argued that compulsory voting will reduce the role of big money in elections because it will render get out the vote drives obsolete. It could also provide a deterrent to negative ads, since a majority of individuals are turned off by their use. Finally, compulsory voting is the only way to ensure that the currently marginalized segments of the population that are currently not voting in large numbers will have their voice in heard in elections and by their representatives, which can help combat the social and economic exclusion they encounter in the first place.

The issue with forcing citizens to vote is that, although it might resolve the voter turnout issue, forcing someone to provide an opinion is arguably antithetical to the core democratic principle of autonomy. In this sense, the right to silence and free choice conflicts with a democracy's obligation to act legitimately. Governments must act legitimately and preserve autonomy, which means that liberty cannot be abrogated, even to preserve democracy.

The tension between individual rights and legitimacy also shows that the resolution concerns deontological questions about individual rights, which are goods in and of themselves, and utilitarian concerns about the instrumental value of compulsory voting regimes. Both sides of the resolution will have access to both types of decision calculi, providing a variety of stock/traditional case structures for debaters.

The utilitarian questions that are inherent to the resolution, along with the nuances between the different types of compulsory voting laws in place around the world and proposed in literature, will provide affirmatives and negative with the opportunity to approach the topic from a policy standpoint. Different laws and exemptions will serve as several different plans or counterplans, depending on the definitions and observations used to divide ground on either side.

Affirmatives can use compulsory attendance cases to avoid links to autonomy disadvantages, while solving some of the core legitimacy issues. Just because you are asked to attend an election doesn't mean you are being forced to vote. This means that there is no harm to autonomy. These cases can be used on the negative to achieve the same strategic goals. It just depends on how you want to divide resolutional ground. The variety of systems in place and proposed means that debaters should learn the nuances between each of the systems to prepare themselves for all the types of plans/counterplans pertinent to the topic.

Finally, the resolution opens itself up to a variety of critical positions on both the affirmative and negative that either question the inequality of current voting practices and its resultant representation or that question the government's ability to compel choice or speech in the form of voting. To force people to vote amounts to coercion. Voting can also be a tool of the capitalist system. To those that run Ks, this topic leads to several options that have not had links in several topics.

Affirmative Playbook

Affirmatives will first have to choose whether they want to defend a resolutional interpretation that forces them to defend compulsory voting or just compulsory attendance. As we stated earlier, there is a stronger lit base with a mandatory voting law rather than mandatory attendance; however, both interpretations can be found in the literature and can be justified. The benefits of compulsory attendance cases have already been discussed, so in this section, I will focus on cases that mandate compulsory voting by all citizens in a democracy.

There are a variety of value structures that affirmatives can choose for this resolution. As discussed in the value section of this guide, one of the core strategies will be to select cases that center around democracy, democratic legitimacy, or rule of law as values in and of themselves. These cases are generally utilitarian and argue that compulsory voting is best for democratic legitimacy, etc. because it solves for low voter turnout and several other harms typical of voluntary voting systems. This leads to benefits that lead to stability of the country and for equality of minorities and equal representation among the voting population.

Social contract and contractarianism are all possible under the affirmative side of the topic. Social contract value structures contend that citizens give up some rights in exchange for the benefits offered by government, including protection and representation. It can be argued that compulsory voting violates individual autonomy by forcing individuals to vote. Social contract cases would argue that this is a necessary breach of a specific right in order to ensure the government functions and is able to protect the citizenry. John Locke would argue that it is necessary to require a citizen's voice in government in order to show support for legitimate government.

Contractarianism cases would argue that relationships are defined by contracts between citizens and that one of these contracts in a democracy is that each individual ought to vote. At this point, compulsory voting would be the fulfillment of the obligation. It is possible to argue this as a negative, indicating that the duty to vote is on the individual and not necessarily on making voting compulsory. Citizens must vote. It is not obligatory to make citizens vote.

Cases will also be able to utilize justice, equality, and fairness value structures. These cases argue that the low turnout indicative of voluntary voting nations disrupts equality and fairness by forcing the government to only be responsive to the small segments that make it to the polls. Compulsory voting upholds these values by ensuring that everyone participates in the process and that the equality of representation and the increased voting turnout and thus the best picture of what the true will of the people is would be justified to uphold these values.

Contention level debate will focus on the harms of collapsing democracies or what happens when democracies become illegitimate, or they will focus on the harms of low turnout and unequal representation. Negatives will also have links to these contentions based on whether they offer alternate obligations or policies, such as compulsory turnout. Critical contentions are possible with these harms, since a lot of the unequal representation skews against marginalized populations.

Negative Playbook

This resolution will provide negatives with a variety of case structures and strategies to pursue. The first strategy is to attempt a counterplan 1NC that attempts to solve many of the same contentions and framework of the 1AC while avoiding additional harms or rights violations. One example that was already discussed are compulsory turnout cases and counterplans. Net benefits this year will revolve around the election of 2020. As we force people to vote, we change the political landscape, and this could swing either Biden or Trump into the White House. The impact scenarios that you choose to run would generally be a Biden Bad or a Trump Bad scenario. Going more in depth on this, we also see that Trump has backlashed against the idea of mailing out ballots to all citizens, which one could argue is a type of compulsory voting. This might cause him to backlash and change policy abruptly and this would either have positive or negative impacts.

Negatives can also pursue rights based or deontological cases to value rights, such as autonomy. These cases contend that forcing citizens to vote is in direct violation of their autonomy. As stated earlier, the freedom to vote also includes freedom from voting. It will be important for these cases to link back into the consequentialist framework of the 1AC by arguing that autonomy is a key component to agency, which is a prerequisite for legitimate political action.

Many options are available that will utilize some sort of ‘state bad’ strategy. Negatives can claim that individuals have obligations to vote, but that government imposition of compulsory mandates is illegitimate. Requiring people to vote and punishing them by law is reminiscent of Iraq pre 2003 and North Korea. This part of the debate is ripe for critical argumentation. Criticisms of democracy, sovereignty, state action or political involvement have resolitional links through the phrases “in a democracy” and “voting.” Coercion type arguments are also apropos as “compulsory” denotes forced action. All of these can operate as individual contentions or as separate criticism depending on the preference of the debater and the best choice for the round.

Further Reading and Classroom Resources

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Affirmative Evidence

Compulsory voting solves turnout – there is no incentive to vote without it

Peter R. Orszag, vice chairman of global banking at Citigroup, adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, and was President Obama's director of the Office of Management and Budget, **2012** (“Make Voting Mandatory,” June 19, 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-06-19/voting-should-be-mandatory.html>,

For economists, the puzzle is not why voting participation rates are so low in voluntary systems, but why they're so high. The so-called paradox of voting, highlighted in a 1957 book by the political scientist Anthony Downs, occurs because the probability that any individual voter can alter the outcome of an election is effectively zero. So if voting imposes any cost, in terms of time or hassle, a perfectly rational person would conclude it's not worth doing. The problem is that if each person were to reach such a rational conclusion no one would vote, and the system would collapse.[¶] Mandatory voting solves that collective action problem by requiring people to vote and punishing nonvoters with a fine. In Australia, the penalty starts small and rises significantly for those who repeatedly fail to vote.

CV could force political to look at all voting ages when making their platform

Washington Post, 8-11-2020, "Opinion," Washington Post,
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/08/11/low-income-americans-could-help-oust-trump-if-they-show-up/?hpid=hp_save-opinions-float-right-4-0_opinion-card-e-right%3Ahomepage%2Fstory-ans

President Trump and the Rev. William Barber II, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, don't agree on, well, anything. So I find it curious that the constantly golfing president seems to be going out of his way to prove the protesting preacher right. A new report from Barber's group shows that Trump's callousness could move poor and low-income Americans to help oust him in November. They just have to show up.

Before an audience of fawning dues-paying members at his private New Jersey club on Saturday, **Trump signed a collection of executive actions that continues a federal unemployment supplemental payment (down from \$600 to at most \$400, including \$100 from states), considers banning possible evictions, allows employees to postpone payment of payroll taxes and waives student loan payments through the end of the year. A congressional agreement on a new covid-19 relief package would have been far better than Trump's "interested bystander" that gave way to the ballroom theatrics in Bedminster.**

As The Post reported, "Only the one on housing is an actual executive order. The other three actions are marked as 'memorandum,' which carries less heft." The story also pointed out that "Overall, this is a limited action." Limited is a kind observation of what Trump did. In the vivid words of Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.), the executive actions are "unconstitutional slop." Others say they are creating "confusion." In the meantime, the American people are suffering.

Coronavirus is exploiting 'the fissures of society,' the Rev. William Barber says

The economy contracted at the fastest rate on record in the second quarter. More than 30 million Americans are now collecting unemployment. A report from the Aspen Institute estimates between 30 million and 40 million people "could be at risk of eviction in the next several months." All of this happening as the novel coronavirus has infected more than 5 million Americans and killed about 160,000, disproportionately impacting African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans. And it's a presidential election year.

The Rev. William J. Barber II outside of St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington on June 14.

The Rev. William J. Barber II outside of St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington on June 14.
(Oliver Contreras/For The Washington Post)

Poverty rarely, if ever, gets discussed on the presidential campaign trail. Barber notes this every chance he gets. But given the misery enveloping large swaths of the U.S. electorate, Trump and presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden will have no choice but to address it. A report released Tuesday from Barber's Poor People's Campaign, Repairers of the Breach and the

Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice shows that the candidate who does could release an untapped well of votes.

According to the report, of the 63 million poor and low-income Americans who are eligible to vote, 34 million did not cast a ballot in the 2016 presidential election. “An increase of at least 1 percent of the non-voting, low-income electorate would equal the margin of victory in the 2016 presidential election in Michigan or a 4 percent to 7 percent increase in states such as Florida, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania or Wisconsin,” the study notes. It also argues that increased turnout among poor and low-income Americans could have an impact on 2020 Senate races. But they have to show up for that to happen.

A virtual march that “put a face on poverty”

“Voters may be avoiding the polls predominantly because no one is speaking to their issues and values,” the report points out. Yet, in the forward, Shailly Gupta Barnes, policy director for the Poor People’s Campaign, notes the Democratic victories in gubernatorial races in Kentucky and North Carolina as examples of what happens when candidates run on a platform that emphasizes equality of access to health care, education and voting rights. Barnes calls it “fusion politics,” the kind that builds “relationships across race and background to unite around commonly held needs and demands” and that “have proven that low-income voters will mobilize and vote when their issues are in clear focus and they are able to hold policy makers accountable.”

In that case, I can only hope that poor and low-income Americans will turn out in record numbers. The issues could not be more clear, as is the list of policy makers who must be held accountable in November. It starts with Trump and includes every Republican whose silence unleashed “this American carnage” ravaging the nation today.

Voting is the only way to stop foreign influence in elections and save Democracy

Paul R., 8-10-2020, "The Coming American Electoral Crisis," National Interest, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/coming-american-electoral-crisis-166573>

merican democracy is in danger as it approaches the November elections, in ways that go beyond even all-too-familiar voter suppression and gerrymandering and threaten to lower the United States to the level of tin-pot dictatorships. The incumbent president—who has never tried to appeal beyond a minority base, is trailing in opinion polls, and often displays authoritarian tendencies—has all but announced that he will not accept an election loss.

President Donald Trump is on course to exploit whatever post-election confusion and chaos he can foment in an effort to stay in power regardless of the will of the majority of Americans.

Trump does not appear to enjoy being president and has no plan for what he would do with a second term. Still, he does not want to go out as a loser and he wants to postpone the day when he may, as a private citizen, be subject to criminal prosecution.

The most likely confusion-and-chaos scenario is that Trump will exploit the coronavirus-inspired fear of voting in person by discrediting what is certain to be an unprecedented amount of voting by mail. Trump already is repeatedly asserting falsely that voting by mail entails widespread fraud. The Trump supporter and fundraiser recently installed as postmaster general appears to be impeding the U.S. Postal Service's ability to provide the timely delivery which widespread voting by mail requires. Trump is likely also to exploit public anxiety during a wait for results that may last days or even weeks as election officials count more absentee ballots than they ever have before.

This is the sort of scenario that those who care about American democracy should worry about the most. It can be countered by a strong voting turnout, by a vote so lopsided that the will of the majority is not in doubt, and by members of the president's party showing that they value American democracy more than victory by any one party.

All this is internal to the United States and does not revolve around external intrusion, not even by the coronavirus. The situation evokes Benjamin Franklin's comment to a fellow citizen that the constitutional convention of 1787 produced "a republic—if you can keep it."

According to the data, these are the worst colleges in the United States. Avoid sending your kids to these schools at all costs - you cou...

But also, **Trump can exploit angles that do involve external powers if he tries to stay in the White House despite an election defeat. Those angles are not limited to direct interference by foreign governments in the U.S. election campaign, which aided him in 2016 and threatens to be a factor again in 2020.**

Another possible foreign angle is the outbreak of an attention-grabbing international crisis, especially involving open warfare, that drags in the United States. This has long been the sort of external event that aids an incumbent with a rally-round-the-flag effect, even in the absence of any shenanigans corrupting the electoral process.

Additionally, Trump might point to a foreign crisis and especially war as one more reason—added to any domestic balloting uncertainties—that he needs to remain the president. No U.S. president has tried to use that tactic to overturn an election defeat. But Franklin D. Roosevelt’s breaking in 1940 of the longstanding tradition of no third term was premised largely on the outbreak of World War II, which the United States would enter the following year, and Nazi Germany’s overrunning of most of Europe.

Unfortunately, some other foreign powers have leaders with incentives to foment just the sort of conflicts that would drag in the United States and serve Trump’s purposes. One is Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose political troubles regarding corruption charges have recently been compounded by public anger over a surge of coronavirus infections in Israel. Netanyahu has as much motivation as he ever has had to escalate on his favorite attention-diverting front, which is Iran. The recent wave of sabotage inside Iran may reflect that motivation.

Iran is the front that probably is most capable of dragging the United States into open warfare in the near future. And Netanyahu, of course, would love to see an extension of the presidency of Trump, who has given Netanyahu’s government almost unlimited political cover to do whatever it wants in militarily conquered and occupied territory.

Saudi crown prince and de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) has similar motives, and a similar ability to stoke trouble with Iran that could ensnare the United States. MbS already has shown his reckless streak, and he may do more reckless things in the face of setbacks in the Yemen war, internal challenges related to low oil prices, and his drive to achieve unrivaled personal power within the kingdom. MbS, like Netanyahu, owes Trump favors for soft-peddling even an outrage such as the killing of Jamal Khashoggi.

Russian president Vladimir Putin has domestic political problems of his own that may lead him to seek major distractions. As for how he currently sees U.S. politics, he still has the motivation he did four years ago to discredit the American democracy. With three and a half years of Trump’s presidency to observe, Putin also has even more reason than he did four years ago to count on that presidency to weaken and discredit the United States overseas—which he presumably would see redounding to the relative benefit of Russia. Whether Putin acts on these observations, by stirring up some new confrontation, in a place such as Afghanistan or Syria, may depend on whether he sees such a confrontation as working to Trump’s domestic political benefit.

Again, Americans who cherish their democracy need to worry most about purely domestic things such as mail-in ballots. But they should not overlook the ways in which foreign action might exacerbate a crisis of democracy.

Empirically, compulsory voting increases voter turnout and even if Americans oppose it, attitudes change, as proven by DADT

Ken Rudin, Political commentator at NPR and Editorial Coordinator at StateImpact, **2010** ("Is 'Compulsory Voting' The Answer?", <http://www.npr.org/blogs/politicaljunkie/2010/06/01/127348895/is-compulsory-voting-the-answer>)

Australia had voting participation at around 60 percent before it instituted mandatory voting, and now it's up to 95 percent. But, as Robert pointed out, **an ABC News poll indicated that 72 percent of Americans are opposed to compulsory voting. Isn't this a non-starter?** **Galston conceded that it could be tough but added that perceptions change. Just look at the public's turnaround on "don't ask, don't tell,"** he said.

Compulsory voting increases election regimes, which leads to greater professionalization, better results, and more incentives for participation

Simon Jackman, Assistant Professor and Victoria Schuck Faculty Scholar, Department of Political Science at Stanford, **2001** (“Compulsory Voting,” to appear in the International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, <http://jackman.stanford.edu/papers/cv.pdf>,

CV does place an onus on citizens, but states with CV typically reciprocate with institutional mechanisms reducing compliance costs (e.g., weekend voting, ease of registration, widespread use of absentee and postal ballots). According to Gosnell (1930, 209) “fines and penalties under a system of compulsory voting are a minor matter. **The important feature of the system is that voting is regarded as a civic duty and the government does everything to impress upon voters this point of view.** **And as a practical matter, the more serious the commitment to CV, the more bureaucratic resources are required to maintain registration records and ensure compliance.** For instance, in Australia, these two sides of CV -- the “carrot and stick” -- are administered by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), a large and highly professional bureaucracy responsible for all aspects of Australian federal elections. Ensuring compliance with CV is just one of many AEC functions, and the bulk of its activities are to do with other aspects of election administration (e.g., redistricting, voter registration, public financing of campaigns, ballot design, location and staffing of polling stations, vote tallying). Thus **one (perhaps unintended) consequence of CV is the centralization and professionalization of election administration. In turn this may mitigate the dangers that accompany decentralized and non-professional election administration, clearly evident in the aftermath of the 2000 U.S. presidential election.**

Compulsory voting decreases the influence of big money in elections by reducing the role of negative advertisements and voter registration drives

Peter R. Orszag, vice chairman of global banking at Citigroup, adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, and was President Obama's director of the Office of Management and Budget, **2012** ("Make Voting Mandatory," June 19, 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-06-19/voting-should-be-mandatory.html>),

Beyond simply raising participation, compulsory voting could alter the role of money in elections. Turn-out-the-vote efforts, often bankrolled by big-money groups, would become largely irrelevant. Negative advertising could be less effective, because a central aim of such ads is to discourage participation in the opponent's camp.

CV provides a more accurate picture of the voting population

Chong, Alberto and Mauricio Olivera. "On Compulsory Voting and Income Inequality in a Cross Section of Countries." Inter-American Development Bank. May 2005. Pg 8-9.

<https://publications.iadb.org/en/publication/compulsory-voting-and-income-inequality-cross-section-countries>

Likewise, some partial evidence sustains the connection between turnout and representation. As differentials in turnout based on socioeconomic characteristics diminish, support for leftist parties increases (Pacek and Radcliff, 1995; Nagel, 1998). It has been shown that higher turnout benefits leftist parties, while lower turnout appears to favor parties of the right (McAllister, 1986). Furthermore, income is consistently, positively correlated with the probability of voting, while education has proven to be positively and significantly related to voter turnout in virtually every study of voter participation (Muller, 1989).⁵ Also, it has been argued that compulsory voting countries and non-compulsory voting countries have the same mean voter turnout, but differ in the prevalence of democratic institutions; the compulsory-voting group has a greater democratic presence than the voluntary voting group. A sample of countries with a greater prevalence of democratic institutions exhibits greater sensitivity to voter preferences than a sample of basically autocratic countries. That is, insofar as government consumption consists of public goods and redistributive transfers, democracies are more sensitive to the general needs of the populace than autocratic regimes, where greater shares of increasing gross domestic product may be transferred to the private wealth of the ruling elite (Yeret, 1995).

Guaranteed turnout means candidates focus on right issues during campaign.

Lever, Annabelle. 2009. Is Compulsory Voting Justified?. Public Reason 1 (1): 57-74 http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/23100/1/Is_Compulsory_Voting_Justified_%28publishers%29.pdf

It may cut down the cost of campaigns, encourage politicians to engage with those who are least interested in politics, and it may minimize negative campaigning, as well. The idea behind these potentially attractive features of compulsion is that if everyone has to vote, politicians can largely take turnout for granted, but have an especial interest in ensuring that those who turn out do not vote for the other side. In short, compulsion means that the battle is not, any more, to make sure that your supporters actually get to the polls, or to deter those of your opponents from doing so, (apparently the chief effect of negative campaigns), but to ensure that of those who turn out, as many vote for you as possible (61)

Low turnout harms the socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Lever, Annabelle. 2009. Is Compulsory Voting Justified?. Public Reason 1 (1): 57-74. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/23100/1/Is_Compulsory_Voting_Justified_%28publishers%29.pdf

So, it looks as though those people who do least well in our societies are least likely to vote; and in what seems to be a vicious circle, those least likely to vote are least likely to attract sympathetic attention from politicians eager to get elected or reelected. So inequalities in turnout are troubling, because they suggest a vicious circle in which the most marginal members of society are further marginalized. Not only that: in so far as these non-voters are more likely to vote for social democratic polities than other people, and particularly likely to benefit from them, inequalities in turnout seem to deprive the left of a significant political constituency and make it easier for the right to get reelected. Hence, as Lijphart makes plain, social democrats should be particularly concerned about declining voter turnout because it makes it more difficult to elect social democratic governments and, therefore, to pass social democratic legislation or public policies. (59- 60)

Unequal participation harms our country

**Alex White. June 14, 2013. New Matilda,
<https://newmatilda.com/2013/01/14/defence-compulsory-voting>**

Unequal voter participation has other negative consequences. The people least likely to vote under voluntary systems are people from the least privileged backgrounds. They are people with low incomes, or from ethnic backgrounds, or with less education.

In most industrialised countries, it is age and education that have most impact on whether you vote or not. This means that younger people are less likely to vote — not because they're lazy, but because they have less access to free time, less income, less time to devote to civic activities (not all young people are Arts students after all).

Unequal representation expands the privilege gap

Lever, Annabelle. "Compulsory Voting: A Critical Perspective." *British Journal of Political Science* (2009).

http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/23100/1/ls_Compulsory_Voting_Justified_%28publishers%29.pdf

It is not news that turnout has been declining in most democracies since the Second World War. However, the association of low turnout with unequal turnout may be less well known, and its significance less clearly appreciated. For example, in the last two General Elections in Britain the participation gap between manual and non-manual workers more than doubled: from around 5% in 1997 to around 11% in 2005. Likewise, between the 1960s and 2005 the difference in turnout between the top and bottom quartile of earners grew from 7% to around 13%. These results are not dissimilar in other countries.

The fact that lower turnout means increasingly unequal turnout is troubling, because those least likely to turn out are overwhelmingly drawn from the least privileged social groups in a polity. Thus, the IPPR report notes that though 'socio-economic status - whether measured by income, class or education - is not as significant a factor as age in determining whether a person will vote or not, it has nevertheless become an increasingly

significant factor - at least in the UK although there has been some decline in turnout among all income

categories since 1964, the decline is most rapid for those with the lowest income'. So, it looks as though those people who do least well in our societies are least likely to vote; and in what seems to be a vicious circle, those least likely to vote are least likely to attract sympathetic attention from politicians eager to get elected or reelected. Inequalities in turnout are troubling, then, because they suggest a vicious circle in which the most marginal members of society are further marginalized. (1)

Increased voter turnout increases stability in democracy

Lijphart, Arend. "Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma. The American Political Science review, Volume 91, Issue 1. March 1997. Pg 10

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/13n5q9qx>

Tingsten (1937) already used the Weimar example to warn that "exceptionally high voting frequency may indicate an intensification" of political conflict that may foreshadow the fall of democracy. The danger is that, in periods of crisis, sudden jumps in turnout mean that many previously uninterested and uninvolved citizens will come to the polls and will support extremist parties. This however, is an argument for, not against compulsory voting: Instead of trying to keep turnout at steady low levels, it is better to safeguard against the danger of sudden sharp increases by maintaining steady high levels, unaffected by crisis and charismatic leaders. Additional evidence that the Weimar precedent should not discourage efforts to increase turnout is Powell's (1982, 206) comparative study of 29 democracies in which he found a strong association between higher voter turnout and less citizen turmoil and violence: "The data favor the theorists who believe that citizens involvement enhances legitimacy" instead of producing democratic breakdown.

Negative Evidence

Compulsory voting encourages random votes because people are forced to vote against their will

IDEA, 2012 ("Compulsory Voting," http://www.idea.int/vt/compulsory_voting.cfm)

Another consequence of mandatory voting is the possible high number of "random votes". Voters who are voting against their free will may check off a candidate at random, particularly the top candidate on the ballot. **The voter does not care whom they vote for as long as the government is satisfied that they fulfilled their civic duty.** What effect does this immeasurable category of random votes have on the legitimacy of the democratically elected government?

Political scientists agree that compulsory voting would not solve for partisanship in the United States

Peter R. Orszag, vice chairman of global banking at Citigroup, adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, and was President Obama's director of the Office of Management and Budget, **2012** ("Make Voting Mandatory," June 19, 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-06-19/voting-should-be-mandatory.html>)

Interestingly, political science literature has historically found more modest effects on election outcomes in the U.S. from compulsory voting than one might think. Recent work by John Sides of George Washington University and colleagues is consistent with previous research by Raymond Wolfinger in finding "little evidence that increased turnout would systematically transform partisan competition or policy outcomes." This parrots the conventional wisdom among political scientists.

Proponents of compulsory voting are motivated by partisan interests – they want to increase control of the Democrats

Jonah Goldberg, visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, June 27, 2012 (“Voter Apathy Isn’t a Crime,” Los Angeles Times, <https://www.latimes.com/la-oe-goldberg-mandatory-voting-20120626-column.html>)

This brings us to the cynicism of it all. While many political scientists and economists hold that mandatory voting probably wouldn’t change electoral outcomes, many people still believe that compelling the poor, the uneducated, and the politically unengaged would be a boon to Democrats (what that says about Democrats is for others to judge). I wonder: Would the winner of the ballot lottery have to show a photo ID?¶ **It’s hard to see how Orszag is interested in anything other than changing the rules for his side’s benefit. As Reason magazine’s Tim Cavanaugh notes, just last year Orszag argued for taking some policymaking out of the hands of voters and empowering technocrats — like him — to run the country. “We need to counter the gridlock of our political institutions,” Orszag explained, “by making them a bit less democratic.”** **Ornstein and Mann**, whose new book blames Republicans for all that’s wrong in Washington, make a slightly different argument. They **claim that coerced voting would revive the political center by reducing the influence of activists and ideologues.**¶ **Ultimately, this is a more sophisticated way of making the same argument. They do not like the way conservatives have been winning battles in Washington. Forcing people to vote, they hope, would put an end to that.**

Turn: Compulsory voting creates a race to the middle situation where politicians are afraid to offend the population, leading to governance through polling and increasing disillusionment

Lydia Bevege, Development Coordinator for the Australian Institute of Public Affairs, June 10, 2012 ("Should voting be compulsory?" <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/ipad/should-voting-be-compulsory/news-story/d85e1edc9a0280ab3414471ee38d379b>)

It's also likely that compulsory voting has a negative impact on politicians. Though we're told compulsory voting forces our politicians to appeal to the entire electorate, in reality it encourages them to adopt stances that will offend the least number of people. As a result, politicians embrace the policy-by-focus group approach to governance.¶ This approach has led to unprecedented disillusionment with the political process by voters.¶ And with electronic voting potentially around the corner, gone could be the days when you could scribble "none of the above" on your ballot paper, or even just fold it up blank and pop it into the ballot box. Voters could be forced to submit a valid vote by numbering all the boxes before a computer will accept their vote.

Empirically, compulsory voting does not increase political engagement – some people just do not care about politics and their inclusion does not improve democracy

Lydia Bevege, Development Coordinator for the Australian Institute of Public Affairs, June 10, 2012 (“Should voting be compulsory?” [Sun Herald](http://www.ipa.org.au/sectors/ideas-liberty/news/2681/should-voting-be-compulsory-), <http://www.ipa.org.au/sectors/ideas-liberty/news/2681/should-voting-be-compulsory->)

The biggest myth in this debate is that Australia's system of compulsory voting is normal. Forcing our citizens to vote in every state and federal election is not normal. Virtually no other democracies in the world do it. ¶ Australia's compulsory voting laws are coercive and paternalistic, and they are out of step with the majority of developed countries, including the US, Britain, Canada and New Zealand. ¶ People who support our current system claim that we have to force citizens to vote otherwise they might lose interest in the political process. The reality is that, compulsory voting or not, some people just don't care much about politics. ¶ Australian democracy is not enhanced by forcing these people to express an opinion on parties and candidates they dislike.

Turn: Making voting more difficult increases its value and leads to a better quality of elections

Voter Apathy Isn't a Crime," Los Angeles Times, <https://www.latimes.com/la-oe-goldberg-mandatory-voting-20120626-column.html>

It's an unfashionable thing to say, but if anything, voting should be harder, not easier. Scarcity creates value. Sand is cheap because there's so much of it. Gold is valuable because it is rare. If you want people to value their vote, we should make it more valuable. Personally, I wouldn't mind tying eligibility to vote to passing the same citizenship test we require of immigrants. We might get fewer voters, but the voters would be far more likely to appreciate the solemnity of their ballots. But such proposals just elicit rage from people who love democracy — albeit only when they're winning.

Recent proponents of compulsory voting are cynical – the core of civic participation is voluntarism, which is destroyed by forcing people to vote against their will

Voter Apathy Isn't a Crime," Los Angeles Times, <https://www.latimes.com/la-oe-goldberg-mandatory-voting-20120626-column.html>

That might explain the **renewed interest in forcing people to vote against their will**. Peter Orszag, President Obama's former budget director and now a vice chairman at Citigroup, recently wrote a column for Bloomberg View arguing for making voting mandatory.[¶] He's not alone. Icons of the Beltway establishment Norman Ornstein and Thomas Mann also favor the idea. As does William Galston, a former advisor to President Clinton. (Mann and Galston are scholars at the liberal Brookings Institution; Ornstein is a colleague of mine at the American Enterprise Institute.)[¶] While I have great respect for Ornstein, Mann, and Galston — I'm undecided about Orszag — **I find the idea absurd, cynical, and repugnant.**[¶] **Let's start with the repugnant part.**[¶] **One of the chief benefits of coerced voting, according to Orszag, is that it increases participation. Well, yes, and kidnapping drunks in pubs increased the ranks of the British navy, but it didn't turn the conscripted sailors into patriots.**[¶] **I think everyone can agree that civic virtue depends on civic participation. Well, any reasonable understanding of civic participation has to include the idea of voluntarism. If I force you to do the right thing against your will, you don't get credit for doing the right thing.**

**Our freedom to choose means our freedom to not vote
Lacroix, Justine. "A liberal defense of compulsory voting."**

Politics 27.3 (2007): 190-195,

[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/3062/1/A_liberal_defence_of_compulsory_voting_\(LSERO_version\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/3062/1/A_liberal_defence_of_compulsory_voting_(LSERO_version).pdf)

The main argument against compulsory voting hinges on the principle that individual liberty should prevail over other democratic ideals such as equality or participation. The refusal of compulsory voting is thus buttressed on the postulate that citizens must be free to decide if they choose to vote or not. All citizens should have the right to be apolitical, and the act of voting must remain a personal choice, and not an obligation. According to this view, the compulsory vote would be a case of strong paternalism. Strong paternalism occurs when there is intervention to protect or benefit a person, despite that person's informed and voluntary denial of consent to the paternalistic measures proposed (192)

A forced vote can contradict notions of self-interest and personal liberty

Lever, Annabelle. "Compulsory Voting: A Critical Perspective." *British Journal of Political Science* (2009),

[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/3062/1/A_liberal_defence_of_compulsory_voting_\(LSERO_version\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/3062/1/A_liberal_defence_of_compulsory_voting_(LSERO_version).pdf)

People are not always good judges of their own interests, individually or collectively. Still, respect for people's freedom and equality and capacities for reasoned judgement, generally tells against forcing them to exercise their rights, or to make the most of their liberties and opportunities. This is partly because there are normally other, less intrusive, ways to promote people's self-interest than forcing them to act in a self-interested manner. But the difficulty with forcing people to pursue their self interest is, also, that informed, intelligent and reasonable people can disagree about the importance of self-interested ends relative to altruistic ones; and can disagree about the merits of self-interested behaviour in particular, as well as in general. Consequently, unless people have a duty to pursue their self-interest by voting, there is no justification for forcing them to vote, simply because voting would be good for them.

Voting is not always in people's interest. So even if people have a duty to vote when voting is in their self-interest, we still need some reason to believe that voting is in their interests. This is less easy than we might expect. As voters, we can only protect our interests by choosing between the available political candidates or parties who solicit our vote. If none are in our interests, there is no self-interested case for voting. If

they are all compatible with our interests, it may still not be in our interests to vote, even if some of these would be better at protecting our interests than others. Unless our vote is necessary to secure the election of the candidate that is best for us - or to prevent the election of the one that is worst - we may have no self-interested reason actually to go out and vote. This, of course, is why the rational choice literature insists that it is irrational to vote in circumstances where millions of otherwise reasonable men and women are clearly ready, even eager, to do so. So, even if we have a duty to promote our self-interest by voting, it is by no means clear that this translates into a duty to vote at most, let alone all, elections.

Democratic voting rights protect our interests as individuals even when we do not exercise them. This, in part, is why it can be so important that people have legal rights to vote, whether or not they actually exercise them. In and of themselves, both moral and legal rights raise the threshold that arguments for coercion must leap in order to be justified. In this, the right to vote is no different from the right to marry: it protects our self-interest even where we do not exercise it, by ensuring that we are not married off against our will, or denied a voice in collectively binding decisions. In the case of the right to vote, it is only when used in coordination with strangers that its exercise is likely significantly to advance our interests over the baseline protection secured by its bare existence. By ourselves, however, we cannot ensure that others will be willing to cooperate and coordinate politically, and the effort to organize such

cooperation may not be worth it. So even if having an equally weighted vote can be critical to our freedom and equality, it is an open question if and when its exercise will promote our interests. People's self-interest, then, is unlikely to provide a justification for forcing them to vote, even though an important justification for democratic voting rights is that these are helpful, often necessary, to protect people. However, the difficulty with compulsory voting is more fundamental than that. To force people to vote, on paternalist grounds, is to suppose that the election of one of the candidates predictably threatens them with serious harms which they morally ought to avoid. But while democratic politicians pursue policies whose costs and benefits are unequally distributed, it will be hard to construe those unequal costs and benefits as constituting such harms - at least as long as we suppose that the candidates/political parties from which we must choose our government are, genuinely, democratic. So, while we may have a duty to resist racist and undemocratic political candidates, and that this may require us to vote against them, a more general duty to vote on self-interested grounds is inconsistent with core assumptions about democratic politics.

The threat of not voting forces leaders to focus on key issues

Armin Shafer. "Republican Liberty and Compulsory Voting." Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies November 2011. Pg 14.

The second normative argument against compulsory voting sees abstention as a valuable political act in itself. If one dislikes the party platforms or the political personnel on offer, there might be political reasons to abstain. In fact, if participation in an election perpetuated injustice - unfair electoral rules or a corrupt regime - it would be morally appropriate to abstain (Hanna 2009). Not to vote under these circumstances can convey a stronger political message than voting for the lesser evil does. Stripping citizens of the possibility to send this message impoverishes democracy. Creating an artificially high turnout rate could cover up a lack of interest and the level of political dissatisfaction among the citizens (Franklin 1999: 206). If, in particular, the marginalized do not vote because they feel generally sidelined from society, unable to obtain access to education, decent housing, or jobs, it seems difficult to see

how compulsory voting will address, rather than exacerbate, the alienation of these non-voters, who are typically the objects, not the subjects, of political debate and policy, and who typically constitute the 'problems' that politicians are competing to solve. (Lever 2008: 62)

From this perspective, making people vote appears to be a palliative move rather than an appropriate cure for the disease.

The value of voting can be reasonably contested

Lever, Annabelle. 2009. Is Compulsory Voting Justified? Public Reason 1 (1): 57-74. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/23100/1/Is_Compulsory_Voting_Justified_%28publishers%29.pdf

Still, it will not be easy to ground a general duty to vote on this natural duty, because in general it is unclear why support for just institutions should take the form of “electoral participation”, rather than anything else. Reasonable people can disagree about the value of political participation relative to other forms of social participation and support, and even those who value political participation may disagree about the value of voting, compared to other forms of political activity. So it is doubtful that the natural duty to support just institutions can justify legal duties to vote, even though it may sometimes give us morally compelling reasons to vote in some elections.