



Your Voice Matters: 2 Simple Ways to Become Involved in the Election Now

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With the U.S. general election 356 days away, there are 16 major Republican and 5 major Democratic candidates running to become the 45th President of the United States. This important political process officially started when the first major candidate announced his campaign on March 23rd. By late June, 15 others had jumped into the fray.

U.S. elections, especially for President are a long multi-year process, and if you have glimpsed even a few seconds of any of the nationally televised debates to date, there are a lot of voices, some completely unfamiliar, clamoring for your attention. This can give most Americans plenty of reason to NOT care.

As a consequence of our slow boil approach, endless polls and awkward debates, most Americans today are not tuned-in to presidential politics and likely will not until after Labor Day 2016.

But, why should you care...and by care I mean beyond which candidate is hosting SNL?

The President is still a big deal...it matters. And it should matter to you. It potentially affects your education's cost and when you will retire. It impacts your pocketbook and our economy. The President also sets an important tone on issues from national security to data security, and so many more issues that impact your health security and even finally securing full equality. It matters.

But I suspect that you know that...you're smart...you read Alliance Data's blog after all.

Chances are, however, that you didn't vote in the last election – statistically Americans are not disciplined voters. In the 2012 general election, there were 218,959,000 million people of legal voting age; only 146,311,000 million were registered to vote; and of that number – only 126,144,000 million, or 53% of eligible Americans cast a ballot for President. The reasons for voter apathy are vast – but that's for another discussion.

Here are two very easy things that you can do, even starting today.

1. Listen and Get Informed on the Issues.

This is the fun part! Stump speeches, awkward interviews, debate drama all give us early insight into the fabric of these candidates. If you can't stomach the debates (and frankly even the candidates are struggling with the debates), visit their websites or read their books. What are they talking about away from the camera? Two of my Alliance Data colleagues, Holly and Stephanie, are doing exactly that, and so can you. Stephanie recently attended a book signing with one candidate. I asked her if she was all in for this particular candidate, and Stephanie told me "maybe. I'm reading both of his books...then I'll let you know." Holly, on the other hand, is leaning strongly for another candidate. As part of her decision-making process, she is evaluating all of the candidates on their stand on three issues that, to Holly, are critically important, and she intends to continue educating herself about the candidates as their platforms evolve.

2. Register to Vote.

No excuses. It's easy and it is your ticket to the dance! You can visit the www.eac.gov website to get voter information for where you live. The General Election maybe almost a year away, but State primaries and caucuses start early next year, so you have an opportunity to make your voice heard even before the Presidential elections next November. There are lots of other great resources, including the [US Electoral College site](#), [Rock the Vote](#) and the [League of Women Voters](#).

Listen in, register, and vote — super easy and super important. A college professor of mine kept a tattered bumper sticker in his office. It read "Su Vota Es Su Vida," which means "your vote is your life," and in many ways how you choose to vote shapes your life and mine. And for my two cents, it is the best way to keep our young democracy fit and healthy.

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