

## The perils of lackluster voter turnout

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While “off year” elections typically draw fewer voters, it was disheartening to see that only 18.57% of Brunswick County voters turned out this month. While we did better than the 15.75% turnout for North Carolina as a whole, these numbers are nonetheless disappointing.

Local elections can have significant impacts on our daily lives. We’re choosing the folks who will decide on development projects and what requirements developers must take to mitigate impacts on our quality of life.

Several elections came down to incredibly narrow margins, confirming that individual votes absolutely matter. Even recent state and presidential elections have been decided by relatively narrow margins. Voting is important at EVERY level of government and EVERY citizen has a stake in the outcomes.

It is particularly concerning that younger voters have even lower voter turnout rates than other age groups. If anything, younger voters should have the highest turnout rates, since the decisions made by those elected may affect them for the rest of their lives, certainly after older voters are no longer in the electorate.

Thanksgiving is a good time to reflect on the many blessings of living in a Democracy. It’s a blessing that we dare not take for granted. MAGA Republicans are making voting more difficult by shortening early voting periods, increasing identification requirements, and gerrymandering districts to allow politicians to choose their voters.

I implore younger voters to take a more active role in shaping the governmental decisions that will determine their future. Voting is the simplest and easiest way to do this. Yes, we need more younger voters to run for office, but the most important action we need is at the ballot box.

We should all commit to voting in every election, in every race. Democracy is a “use it or lose it” option, and we’re perilously close to losing it unless we reclaim our power.

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