How I Vote Matters, #HIVMatters

October 31, 2014 By Paul Kawata

The following is a guest post by National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) Director of Outreach and Public Affairs, Kyle Murphy.

Today may be Halloween, but we're more excited for Nov 4: Election Day! But as communities gear up to turn out voters, others are still trying to make sense of new voting restrictions being pushed in states across the country. Since the Supreme Court struck down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act last year [Shelby County v. Holder], several states have been emboldened in their push for laws to suppress turnout and disenfranchise voters, all in the hopes of gaining a slight edge on election day. Tactics range from reducing early voting periods, to requiring government issued photo ID, or eliminating same-day registration. But across the board, they hit communities of color the hardest.

Show that we won't be silenced! Learn what your state's requirements are to vote and see all our graphics at http://nmac.org/OurVote

While national media focus on the undeniably important races for control of the U.S. Senate, perhaps more significant for our community are the gubernatorial, state assembly and city council races across the country. The people elected to these seats will determine the future of the very voter restrictions that are wreaking such havoc this year. They will also decide whether your state will cooperate and/or participate in Medicaid expansion, determine how state prevention and care funding is distributed and what types of sexual education is made available to residents.

Those communities that have borne the brunt of the HIV epidemic are the very ones that have struggled the hardest to secure the right to vote. From ratification of the 15th and 19th amendments, which extended voting rights to former slaves and women, through the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, our nation's progress has been closely tied to the ability of marginalized populations to vote. Now, even as issues that will impact the health and lives of people living with and vulnerable to HIV are center stage, these very same communities must contend once more with questions about how and if they can vote.

Elections should be won on issues, not voter suppression. Stand up and speak out! Get to the polls on Tuesday and vote on the issues that matter to you! Share our images and tell us why or how you voted with #HIVMatters.

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