



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senator Griffo's Weekly Column #33: Myths vs. Facts Regarding Voter Registration

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO September 25, 2014

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“Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote,” writer George Jean Nathan once observed.

Election Day is Nov. 4. To participate, however, you’ll need to be registered to vote by Oct. 10.

I know from reading research and talking to people that there are several reasons why people don’t vote. First, I’d like to tackle some misconceptions about registering to vote.

Myth: If I register to vote, I’ll be called for jury duty.

Fact: Jurors are drawn from lists of taxpayers, licensed drivers and registered voters. Most people wouldn't give up their ability to drive a car in New York just to avoid jury duty. This is a lame excuse. It's in the Constitution that Americans have the right to a trial by jury of their peers. If you were accused of a crime, wouldn't you want someone to stand up for that right for you?

Myth: If I register to vote here, I'll have to pay New York state income taxes.

Fact: I encounter this misconception a lot with military families. If you have a residence here and in another state, you are considered a resident of New York – and all of your income is subject to New York tax – if you spend more than 183 days in the Empire State. If you can keep a good accounting of where you stayed during the year, voting registration will have no impact on your taxes.

Myth: If I register here, I'll have to give up my scholarships or financial aid. And my parents won't be able to claim me as a dependent.

Fact: Federal financial aid – such as Pell Grants, Stafford loans and SMART grants – do not consider voting registration. Almost all states give you financial aid to use in schools in their state. Rhode Island and Vermont are the only two state that let you use financial aid from them for college in New York. Vermont considers your parents' residency (assuming you live with them when not in school). Rhode Island considers voting registration as one many factors considered to determine if you are a resident of their state.

As for your parents' ability to claim you as a dependent, that's based on your income and their support – not where you're registered to vote.

Myth: If I register here, it will affect my health insurance or car insurance rates.

Fact: Voter registration has no effect on health insurance. Insurers of cars are more interested in where you're driving your car. Voter registration is not considered.

In my next column, I'll make the case for why you should vote in the upcoming election. To register, find the form [here](#) - or go to your local Board of Elections, which are listed [here](#).