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Editorial

Posted Thursday, November 4, 2004 5:00 pm

Record voter turnout shows something else

Like many Americans this election year, Sealy and Austin County voters turned out like never before to perform their civic duties over the last few weeks, both on Election Day and as absentee voters.

Nationally, election night media coverage estimated upwards of about a half million more people showed up to cast ballots this year. Locally, about 63 percent of roughly 17,000 registered voters here went to the polls to exercise their Constitutional rights as citizens.

To those of you let your voice be heard, we commend you.

You are the reason so many patriots have fought and died, and in exercising the freedoms those patriots lived and died for, you send out the message that their courageous efforts did not go unnoticed.

But as impressive as 63 percent voter turnout may sound, the statistics tell of another group of the population as well.

There were at least 37 percent of 17,000 registered voters - nearly 5,200 people who bothered to fill out the little forms with the county clerk's office - who decided they had better things to do than vote.

It wasn't like they didn't have the chance. Early voting occurred through much of October. For those away from their homes during that time, mail-in ballots were an option. And for a full 12 hours nationwide, thousands of barely paid, overworked and in today's times, horribly scrutinized election workers managed lines of people, just so we could exercise our duty.

Thirty-seven percent. Five thousand two hundred people.

That's our city population.

Particularly when one of our local election - although results may change - was decided by only 37 votes.

Keep in mind, that "registered voter" count doesn't include those who either by criminal or personal conviction choose not to take part in the election process by failing to file their registration cards.

All in spite of the millions of people throughout history who have laid life and limb before God to procure and protect a right that even today, millions around the world don't enjoy.

Keep that thought in mind the next time we have the chance to exercise our freedoms, both you who failed to show and those of you who turned out in record numbers this year. Sure, choosing the leader of our country is indeed a noble cause, but so is selecting the man or woman who will make decisions about how our schools or cities are run, weighing in your support behind local policy decisions and ensuring that those young souls who were too little to participate in this year's election have a reason to do so as they grow into adulthood.

It isn't just your future depending on such decisions made by elections. In many more ways, it's theirs.

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