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Special Edition

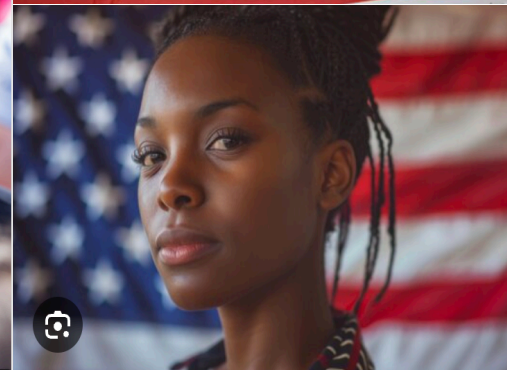
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YOU CAN'T SIT THIS ONE OUT!

Election 2024



DEMOCRACY



Leaning Toward Democracy by Voting

By Dr. Marlene A. Saunders

During a meeting about the upcoming election on November 5th, 2024, an individual in the audience asked, ***“Why is this election likened to saving democracy?”***

Timothy Synder wrote “History does not repeat, but it does instruct”^[1]. Threats to American democracy exist now in the United States. They are obviously clear in the deceitful rhetoric and propaganda of the former president who is now a front runner for the office of President in the 2024 General Election. Take note of his campaign slogan, “Reclaim America”, which takes our country back to periods in American history when organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan not only terrorized African Americans, but Jews, Catholics, and immigrants, as well.

Concern about how the outcome of this election can turn America toward a non-democratic direction is not new. Synder (2017) informs us that the Founding Fathers were concerned that our form of government would fall; thus, they “... sought to avoid the evil that they, like the ancient philosophers, called tyranny” (p.10). His book titled, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons From The Twentieth Century*, is exceedingly instructive. It provides American voters fact-based histories about the breakdown of democracies in Europe, (in such countries as Germany, Czechoslovakia and Russia) and became infamous examples of Nazism, fascism, and communism. The histories contained in the book are illuminated by specific characteristics of non-democratic power, how non-democratic

leaders and dominant parties rose to power and were eventually elected to office. This kind of history shows how the evolution of anti-democratic leadership in other countries, in the twentieth century, can be applied to the United States today.

As an example, please remember, American voters have observed a former president and current presidential candidate inciting an unimaginable and dangerous attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. Citizens were injured and killed during the uprising. Subsequently, a leader of the Republican Party, and Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, called former President Trump’s actions “disgraceful”, further stating he is “practically and morally responsible” for what took place that day” ([Minority Leader McConnell Says President Trump “Practically and Morally Responsible” for January 6 Attack on Capitol | C-SPAN.org](#)). Yet, McConnell and the Republican Party later endorsed Trump as the party’s nominee for president in upcoming election.

In addition, the Republican candidate for president is a convicted criminal having been charged with 34 felony counts of falsifying business accounts. He knows he can duck jail time if he wins this election. Not be ignored is the fact that this candidate and his party support legislation enacted, across the board, that limits access to voting, bans books, prohibits the instruction of Black history in schools, and promotes hate and inequalities with rhetoric which reminds us of the nativism that justified



the violence and discrimination against immigrants and naturalized citizens throughout this country's history. His mean-spirited characterization of Haitians, a Black skinned population like African Americans, as actually less than human because, as he stated, they eat cats and dogs, reveals unmistakable racism.

Nor can we overlook the elite wealthy donors to this campaign who subscribe to a form of leadership that ostracizes groups and creates an "us versus them" mentality that has divided the country and created unrest for everyone. An example of this is Elon Musk, the owner of Tesla and SpaceX, who has donated \$75 million dollars to a pro-Trump super PAC. African American voters, in particular, should keep in mind that, among other racist atrocities, Musk endorsed a tweet suggesting Black students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have lower IQs and shouldn't become pilots. The implications of this level of financial support are significant when placed in the context of donors' expectations in terms of paybacks (e.g., cabinet appointments, special assignments as consultant, etc.) wealthy donors expect if their candidate wins.



Voting is one of the ways African Americans have consistently adhered to the basic tenets of democracy. While constituting only 13.6% of the American population, African American voters are among the most stable voting blocs in politics. During Reconstruction, huge Black voter turnout elected nearly 20 Black Americans to the House and Senate and many more to state and local elected positions. In the 2008 and 2016 elections, the turnout of Black voters was higher than Latinos, and Asians. In the 2012 election, the turnout of Black voters was higher than whites.

It is well known that Black voters, particularly Black women, were critical to President Biden's 2020 win. Supporting his election has benefitted African Americans in many ways, such as, his administration increased Black enrollment in health care coverage through the Affordable Care Act by 49%, or by around 400,000 from 2020 to 2022, helped more Black families gain health insurance than ever before. In addition, President Biden championed the largest increase to Pell Grants in the last decade, a combined increase of \$900 to the maximum award over the past two years, affecting over 60% of Black undergraduates who rely on Pell grants to aid financially in their academic pursuits. Furthermore, his administration dedicated more than \$17B to Historically Black College and Universities, more than any administration in the history of the Republic.

Dr. Renata Hedrington Jones, President, National Association of Black Social Workers, was correct when she said, "We are not choosing parties. We are voting for the President who will move this country forward purposefully and intentionally as we maintain DEMOCRACY".

Preserve DEMOCRACY. VOTE UP AND DOWN THE BALLOT

[1] Synder, T. (2017). On Tyranny: Twenty Lesson from the

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The Delaware Department of Elections announces the
Nov. 5 General Election
early voting sites and schedule pursuant to Delaware law.

Dates and times early voting sites in each county will be open are:

- Oct. 25-29, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Oct. 30-Nov. 3, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Follow the link below:

[Delaware Department of Elections announces 2024 General Election early voting sites, schedule \(newsbreak.com\)](https://newsbreak.com/delaware-department-of-elections-announces-2024-general-election-early-voting-sites-schedule/)



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Let The Truth Be Told (TM) is a quarterly newsletter.

Let the Truth Be Told is intended to give African Americans the opportunity to speak “truth to power” through media such as commentary, poems, history, and art, among others, which will be provided by parents, teachers, children, ministers, historians, and other citizens. This platform aims to transform our words into empowered activism.

We are seeking contributors to **Let the Truth Be Told**. If you feel you have something to say but don't believe you write well enough, don't let that stop you. Please submit what you want to say, and you will be given support which will lead to your voice being heard. **Let the Truth Be Told!**

Submissions are reviewed by the editorial board and may be edited for brevity and clarification. We regret we cannot return any unsolicited articles, photos, or other materials.

Contact information

Contact us: LetTheTruthBeTold2026@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.letthetruthbetold.net/>

Let The Truth Be Told – Editorial Board



Dr. Marlene A. Saunders
Executive Manager



Toni A. Barrett
Executive Editor



Debra A. O'Neal
Graphic Designer



Kathy M. Trusty
Contributing Writer

Vote Like Your Life Depends on It"

By Kathy Trusty

(Originally published Let The Truth Be Told November 2023)

On May 9, 2023, school board elections were held in 11 Delaware public school districts. Except for Delmar, the voter turnout was less than 10% in each district, and Delmar's turnout was an abysmal 10.03%.

Allowing 10% of the population to select those who will be making decisions that affect 100% of the population is appalling.

Unfortunately, that is the case in most local elections. Why is there such voter apathy, generally but particularly, at the local level when decisions made at that level have a direct impact on our lives and the greatest impact on our lives?

Most Americans rarely interact with the federal government, yet the turnout for those elections, though lower than it should be, is much higher than the turnout when elections are held for governor, mayor, state legislators, sheriff, district attorney, school board members and other local officials. Those officials make decisions which affect us daily.

I am perplexed that so many eligible voters do not participate in the process, especially Black Americans. History has shown that those in power can and will enact policies and programs that are not in the best interest of the Black community. The questions remain, why don't more Black Americans vote and vote more consistently at the local level?

"My vote does not count." I have heard this so many times and if this is true, how do you

reconcile this statement with the outrageously restrictive voting laws being implemented today? Your vote **does** count and can effect change, which is why some state legislatures are making it exceedingly difficult for certain communities to participate in the electoral process. After Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock were elected to the United States senate, primarily on the strength of Black voters, the Georgia legislature, controlled by the opposing political party, began taking measures to disenfranchise Black voters. One of their targets is Souls-to-the-Polls, a get-out-the-vote initiative popular with Black churches.

When Americans cast their vote, they often do not vote down ballot. The bottom of the ticket is just as important, if not more, as the top of the ticket. Shortly after President Joe Biden announced his decision to

run for re-election, the New York Times published an article highlighting Black voters' frustration with the President for his failure to deliver on some of his campaign promises, including federal protections

against restrictive voting laws; student loan debt relief; and criminal justice and police accountability measures.

I understand their frustration and yes, the president does share some responsibility for not following through on campaign promises.

I am frustrated as well, however, I am more frustrated because too many of us vote as if the presidency is an autocracy. "He/She alone can fix it" does not apply in a democracy.

**"Not voting is not a protest.
It is a surrender."**

Keith Ellison, Attorney General of Minnesota

Any bill the president wants passed must be voted on and approved by Congress. As voters and participants in the process, we need to keep that in mind.

When we vote for a person to serve as president, we must vote for a “supporting cast” as well, meaning those running to serve in the House of Representatives and the US Senate.

We must vote down-ballot and select representatives and senators who share the president’s vision, so they can pass laws we want enacted. Senators must approve a president’s nominee for the United States Supreme Court and for cabinet positions including Secretary of Transportation, Secretary of Health and Human Services and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. The decisions made by the people in those positions have a significant impact on our lives and well-being.

Eligible voters are more engaged when the presidency is on the ballot, but not so much during off-year and local elections. We need to change our mindset and become more engaged in local elections, and I include myself.

Those elected on the federal level are not responsible for banning Toni Morrison’s books *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* or paring down the Black history that’s barely part of the curriculum. State and local officials are responsible for that.

Those elected to serve in the federal government are not responsible for laws that allow the purchase of military style assault weapons without a comprehensive background check. State and local officials are responsible for that. And those officials were likely voted into office by a small subset of our community.

So, let’s change our mindset about elections and which ones are more important. Let’s get excited about voting in local elections and voting down-ballot in federal elections. It could change your life and the lives of our children.



Intentionally inflamed divisions between, for example, educated and blue-collar citizens, white people and African Americans, and poor and rich Americans, have become more pronounced and serious as weapons against democracy and just society. As we approach the 2024 election, we must ask ourselves what kind of federal, state, and local elected officials should be in office to ensure equal access to opportunities for everyone.

Hence, during a period preceding the most important election in the history of the United States, it is essential for voters to be “deep”, especially about situations that have political implications for who becomes president and who gets elected in the state of Delaware. Therefore, seek information that uncovers candidates’ motivations for the legislation they will choose to sponsor (e.g., restrictions on Black history instruction, zoning that limits location of affordable housing, etc.) and provides insights about the beneficiaries of their platforms.

Knowing the donors to candidates always helps to answer the question: why is this candidate supporting this legislation, program, or policy?

BE INFORMED!

Excerpt from What Was the Real Issue that Pushed Dr. Claudine Gay to Resign as President of Howard University? by Dr. Marlene A. Saunders, Let The Truth Be Told, February 2024

STOP, LOOK, READ & VOTE

My Dear Sister, Brothers, Family, & Friends,

I was just thinking and reading some information about Black folks and our NOT voting.

We have mighty men and women who died for us to vote and now the new age is saying that they will not vote because they don't matter. **WE ALL MATTER. MOST OF ALL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE MATTER. YOU ARE OUR FUTURE AND YOUR LEGACY IS GREATER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.**

Black people, African American, African people, All you Brown (Black) sugar babies, **YOU MATTER, YOU MATTER TO ME, YOU MATTER TO MY MOMMA, YOU MATTER TO MY GRAND MOMMA, MY DADDY, MY AUNT RITA, AUNTEE, AND YOU JUST MATTER** because you are the dreams of the ancestors. Without you there is no me. Your **VOTE Matters**. Stand tall, heads up, hearts strong with love for one another. If the preacher will not stand and say **VOTE MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS VOTE**. Then you must **VOTE** and take others to the polls with you.

Don't believe the lies, the propaganda, the hype, the promises, and most of all don't believe the man who has identified our worth by the jobs we hold. We had a Black man hold the position of **PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**; we have a Black woman who is the Vice President of the United States of America...

Come on don't sit this one out. We are not choosing parties we are voting for the President who will move this country forward purposefully and intentionally as we maintain **DEMOCRACY** for all. Please don't be fooled. Dictatorship has been promised. This means our **FREEDOMS** will be negatively impacted and **OUR FREEDOM** matters. Thousands died so that we could live. Don't let this opportunity to **VOTE** pass you by.

I am counting on you to **VOTE** and **BE THE VOICE OF FREEDOM FOR ALL**. Harriett said it best, "I could have freed more had they realized they were slaves". We are **FREE**, my Brothers and Sisters, let's make sure we **VOTE**. **ALL IN!!!!!!!!!!!! VOTE**

Forward Ever Backwards Never,

Dr. Renata A. Hedrington Jones

(Queen Afia Nzinga)

Medasse!

Dr. Renata A. Hedrington Jones is the President of the National Association of Black Social Workers. This article was published with permission from the author. Original and complete article is in the NABSW Wellness Warriors October 2024 Edition

Voting for Democracy to Achieve Equality

by Dr. Marlene A. Saunders

(Originally published Let The Truth Be Told November 2023)

How quickly time is passing becomes clear when we realize another election cycle is upon us. In November 2024, a short 12 months from now, Delawareans will have the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to VOTE. For many African Americans, voting is a painful reminder of the dangerous struggle many endured to achieve the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Some, however, did not survive. Among the sacrifices of the Civil Rights Movement were the brave and democratically patriotic individuals who were murdered while seeking the right to vote for African Americans. Let's never forget James Earl Chaney (African American), Andrew Goodman (Jewish), Michael Henry Schwerner (Jewish), Rev. James Reeb (white), Viola Gregg Liuzzo (white), Jimmie Lee Jackson (African American) and the many others who were killed. This history, combined with well-founded and legitimate concerns about the aftermath of the 2020 election, including former president Donald Trump's attempt to overturn the election and the mob attack on the United States Capitol, should be regarded as a serious warning that democracy and America are not on a stable foundation.

When asked whether we have a republic or a monarchy, Benjamin Franklin replied, "A Republic, if you can keep it." Among the factors that saved the Republic in 2020 was the fact that we garnered enough votes to defeat the former president. The election was notable because it had the highest voter turnout of this century. It must be noted though that a second critical factor was the number of elected officials, which included the Vice President and other Republican elected politicians, who rejected the former president's orders and pleas to identify votes necessary to overturn the election and/or appoint Trump electors.

This election cycle includes massive registration campaigns in Delaware. If you are not registered to vote, DO SO! However, the emphasis this article is placing on voting lets you know that registering but not voting will not preserve democracy and will not halt the perverted effort to dismantle our government in the manner we witnessed in 2020.

This reality leads to the choices Delawareans will make in the 2024 election. The national offices up election are U.S. Congressman-at-Large, and U.S. Senator. State-wide offices to fill are Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Insurance Commissioner. Also, open on the state level are 10 State Senate seats. In addition, there will be candidates to elect to fill all 41 State Representative seats. Voters will have the opportunity to choose the candidate who will occupy the Office of Mayor for the City of Wilmington, Wilmington City Council President and eight Wilmington City Council seats. In Kent County, three of the six Levy Court Commissioner seats are among the positions up for election, and in Sussex County, three of the five districts are on the schedule for elections.

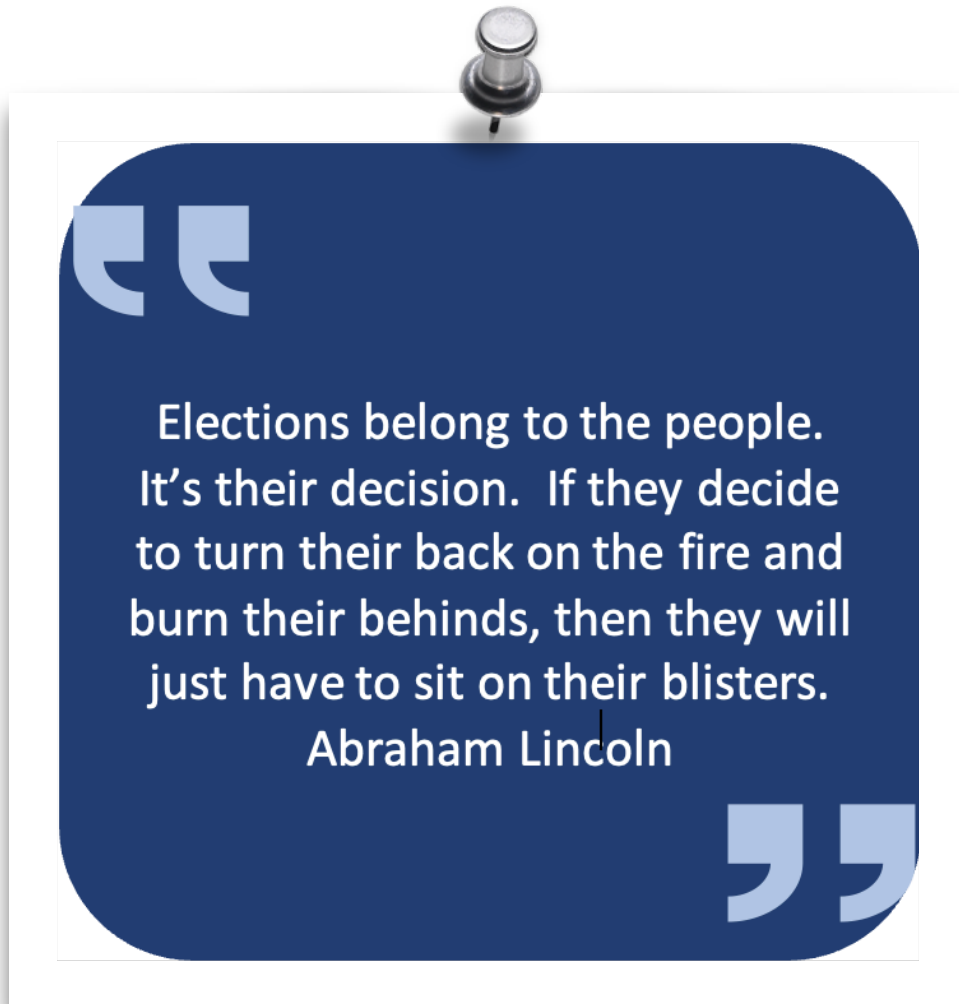
When the February 2024 edition of *Let The Truth Be Told* is published, the early voting period for the Presidential Primary Election will begin the following month. The polls for school board elections will open on May 14, 2024. If you are still asking why we focus on voting so early, when the first election (Presidential Primary Election) is five months off, here are some answers:

1. The troubling events following the 2020 election clearly indicate that voting cannot not be taken lightly by anyone, especially African Americans and individuals in other marginalized populations. For example, recent Supreme Court rulings that have weakened protections against discrimination in voting, as well as legislation by states that enacted voting restrictions will likely continue and decrease access to voting by African Americans, other communities of color and poor people.
2. The services, programs and social policies that determine who gets services, the number of services individuals can receive and limits for services, etc. reflect the deliberate choices made by our U.S. Senators, U.S. Congressman, Delaware's Governor, Lieutenant Governor, members of the Delaware General Assembly and local elected politicians, including county commissioners, school board members, etc. These individuals are **voted** into office. Voters should be asking, "Who is listening to Sussex County residents pleading for housing development that simultaneously protects waterways, preserves natural habitats and controls the heavy traffic that has become more than a nuisance?"
3. Communities with low voter turnout run the risk of ending up with elected officials who will not advocate on their behalf to address their unique interests, problems and support workable solutions to resolve social and economic problems and inequities. Delaware was virtually unresponsive to the impact of COVID on African American communities and other communities of color until grassroots organizations noted the neglect. Although the state eventually stepped up COVID-focused prevention and treatment programs, disparities continue to persist. Who are the candidates that will not only advocate for health care services to treat and prevent COVID but, in addition, will support to expand health care to individuals with health problems that were disproportionately represented in African American communities before the pandemic?

Before closing, an important point needs to be made. Democracy certainly has not created equal opportunities for African Americans, and their questions about the value of voting should not be dismissed. However, do not be mistaken that the group is apathetic about voting. In 2020, the voter turnout among African Americans was greater (62.6%) compared to the turnout for Latino Americans (53.7%) and Asian Americans (59.7%). Nevertheless, continuing the never-ending struggle for representation in all levels of government must include doing the following:

- **Register to vote.**
- **Vote In All Elections**, including school board and all local elections. In addition, voting up and down the ticket (national offices as well as local offices).
- **Vote Early.**
- **Become Informed about all the candidates** in terms of their positions on issues that are important to your well-being and the well-being of your family and community. Then choose your candidate. If a candidate is running for re-election, become informed about the extent to which the legislations he/she voted for and against as well as the legislation they sponsored or co-sponsored kept the promises he/she made while campaigning.
- **Be Engaged.** That is, attend forums in which candidates are participating, ask questions and ask to meet with them.

- **Join a Legislative Advocacy Organization**, e.g., League of Women Voters, Women’s March, and attend and participate in the meetings.
- **Develop Relationships with Individuals Outside Your Racial/Ethnic Group.**
- **Attend School Board, County Council, City Council Meetings.**



Why Voting is Important

By Marie Pinkney

(Originally published Let The Truth Be Told November 2023)

If you live in the Philadelphia media market, like I do, there's a good chance you were overwhelmed this fall by a constant stream of television commercials featuring politicians slinging mud at each other in the run up to the 2023 election.

I know it can sometimes feel like this thing we call democracy is just one big reality TV show where the contestants care way too much about tearing each other down and don't care nearly enough about lifting people up.

As an elected official, I see how that constant negativity could turn people off from politics, elections and voting. As a Black woman, member of the LGBTQ+ community, social worker, and former foster parent who works a full-time job to keep food on the table, I want to urge you to resist apathy, overcome complacency and insist on making your voice heard each and every time you have a chance to vote.

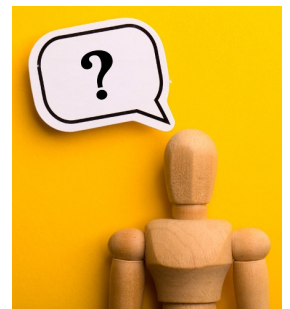
I know, we are all spread so thin these days. There are so many reasons why we're too busy, too discouraged, or too inconvenienced to get to the polls. Often, those reasons are valid, but here's the thing: Those who benefit from the status quo benefit from us staying home!

Many of these politicians don't want people who look the way we do, love the way we do, and think the way we do making decisions about how our cities, our states and our country are run, especially if those decisions are going to threaten existing power structures.

If you don't believe me, just look at our history. For the first 100 years or so of this "great" experiment known as the United States of America, the system was explicitly set up to keep power in the hands of white, male landowners.

When the 14th Amendment affirmed the rights of Black men to vote, those same white, male landowners found new ways to keep us from the ballot through poll taxes, literacy tests and flat-out violence. Women of all ethnicities had to fight for another 50 years just to have a voice in our democracy. Since then, we've seen countless examples of redlining, gerrymandering, and other attempts to minimize or outright disenfranchise people of color.

If our vote didn't matter, why would they work this hard to take it away? Our vote does matter, and when we use it, we have the power to make real change.



The truth is that most decisions affecting our daily lives are made at the local level. What gets taught in your child's school is determined by your local school board. Whether you live near a park or how much you pay for water is decided by your municipality. What roads get paved, how much you pay in taxes and whether you live in a state that uses marijuana to put people in jail or create good-paying jobs is all decided by your state Legislature. Yet these are the elections people most frequently skip.



In 2020, I became just the third Black woman ever elected to the Delaware Senate, but only because 282 people refused to be complacent and accept the status quo. Because of them, I was able to defeat a 40-year incumbent who, on key issues, especially gun safety, was out of touch with our diverse district.

Not only did we pass those gun bills after I was elected, but we also raised the minimum wage, passed paid family leave, increased police accountability, expanded access to birth control and forced insurance companies to pay for insulin pumps and other equipment that people with diabetes need to live.

My election is not unusual. The highest-ranking Republican in the Delaware House won reelection last year by just 35 votes. He then immediately held funding for new schools and bridges hostage while trying to force us to give limited liability corporations the right to decide Seaford town elections, the exact same voting rights that people like him denied to us for generations.

A more diverse electorate has directly led to a more diverse Legislature. In just the last decade, we have gone from one or two Black voices in the General Assembly to 15 Black legislators, one quarter of the Delaware General Assembly with nine of us being women.

Collectively, the Delaware Legislative Black Caucus led the General Assembly to pass an equal rights amendment to the Delaware Constitution, banned discrimination based on hair styles, banned police from using chokeholds, required all police officers in Delaware to wear body cameras and forced them to record any police interrogation of a child, among many other long-overdue reforms. Along the way, we also made voting a lot easier for families like ours. Delaware families can now cast their ballots in person up to 10 days in advance of Election Day. In addition, registering to vote has never been easier.

With your support in the next election, we can add Delaware to the list of 22 red and blue states with same-day registration and one of 27 states with no-excuse absentee voting. A friend of mine likes to say the four most dangerous words in the English language are, "Somebody should do something." The truth is, we can't expect the status quo to change unless we are personally willing to do something about it. That's why I want each of you to cast your vote and make your voice heard when the next election comes around.

Just a few minutes of your time could determine whether we continue down this well-worn path of negativity and complacency or whether we forge a new path of positivity and prosperity for our families, our neighbors, and our communities.

Marie Pinkney, State Senator, District 13