

# OPINIONS

## Don't take your right to vote for granted

STAFF EDITORIAL

### HOW WE SEE IT

With midterm elections around the corner, use your privilege to vote.

Voting is a key part of our democracy. According to the Pew Research Center, college students are historically less likely to participate in midterm elections even though we make up a majority of voters. But who is to say that voter turnout will be different this year?

If anything, the results of the 2016 U.S. presidential election prove that our votes matter. Also, considering the cultural shift toward political polarization, your vote these midterm elections takes precedence over any other election.

As races for midterm elections heat up, recognize the power you have to shape decision-making in the U.S. government. Those of us who make up the electorate are privileged, and we should understand this privilege, especially because we are in close proximity to people who face obstacles when registering to vote.

This past September, North Carolina's state elections board unanimously voted to end a subpoena from the U.S. attorney and Immigration and Customs Enforcement for the disclosure of confidential voter records. Though the collection deadline was pushed to January 2019, there are still great concerns about the reach of the government to collect confidential information that can potentially disenfranchise voters.

The overstepping of governmental power for one constitutional right could affect other freedoms, such as the right to a free press. If one right is compromised, there could be serious repercussions for other freedoms.

This is why citizens need to vote in these upcoming midterm elections in order to be a part of this discussion.

In August 2018, Dean of the School of Communications at Elon University Rochelle Ford wrote an opinions article on the importance of the free press in the U.S. democracy. In her writing, Ford says that recent attacks on news media are troubling, and she affirms the necessity of news reporting to better this country's political process.

"Good news reporting should not tell people what opinion to hold. Instead good news reporting shares

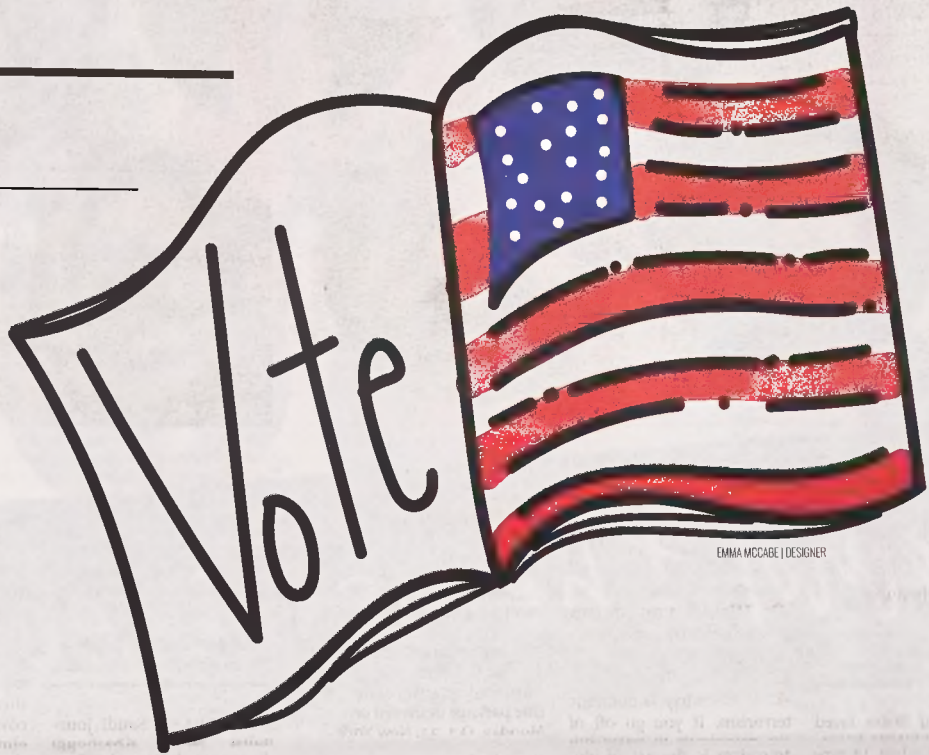
verifiable, attributed information ideally from multiple sources so that people understand the facts necessary to make an informed decision," Ford writes.

Elon News Network stands with Ford. We support a free press that is devoid of political leanings — a newsroom that seeks the truth and supports an open exchange of ideas.

We, as a newsroom, strive to report accurate, fair news in service to our Elon community, but the electorate must participate, too. Exercise your freedom to vote this November.

Whether you are submitting an absentee ballot or traveling directly to the polls, remember the significance of your vote to elect officials who will represent your values in state and federal governments. Don't be easily swayed by media bias, and trust that we will continue to work toward bias-free reporting.

As student journalists, we strive to report information to hold our Elon community accountable. We hope that, with your vote, you will do the same for the federal offices representing our country.



## The issue not enough Americans talk about



Michael Asch  
Columnist  
@elonnewsnetwork

After the Civil War, the U.S. passed the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to ensure rights to former slaves. The 15th Amendment gave them the right to vote, stating, "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

In response, white leaders in the South passed Jim Crow laws to disenfranchise the black vote. There were literacy tests to pass in order to vote. There was a tax to pay in order to vote. There were also groups such as the Ku Klux Klan that terrorized black people. These methods all kept African Americans away from the ballot box.

This went on for almost 100 years. In 1965, due to the Civil Rights Movement, Congress and then-President Lyndon B. Johnson passed the Voting Rights Act. This prohibited racial discrimination in voting, outlawed literacy tests and further enforced the 15th Amendment. In 1966, the Supreme Court case *Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections* found that poll taxes were unconstitutional.

Great strides were made to protect African Americans' right to vote in the 60s, but they are being rolled back today. Part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 said that states with a history of voter suppression needed the federal government to approve changes to their voting rules. The 2013 Supreme

Court case *Shelby County v. Holder* got rid of this provision, essentially gutting the Voting Rights Act. Chief Justice John Roberts argued that conditions had changed and these provisions were no longer necessary. Boy, was he wrong.

A whopping 24 states have created new voting restrictions. One of the most pressing examples is the "exact match" law in Georgia. This requires that citizens' names on their government-issued IDs must precisely match their names as listed on the voter rolls. Georgia's secretary of state is a Republican named Brian Kemp. As secretary of state, it is his job to oversee the state's elections. The problem is that he is currently running for governor. Kemp

has recently put over 53,000 voter registrations on hold, 70 percent of them from black voters. Kemp is using his power to rig the election in his favor.

Exact match laws are not the only example of voter suppression currently happening in the United States. There are also "use it or lose it" laws like the one in Ohio, which states that if an individual does not vote in two consecutive elections, they will be struck from the registration rolls. There are also voter ID laws that require some form of official identification before individuals vote.

Republicans try to justify these laws by saying they are fighting voter fraud. Even President Trump claimed there were millions of cases

of voter fraud in the 2016 presidential election. The truth is that voter fraud is insanely rare. The Brennan Center for Justice found that instances of voter fraud happen at rates between 0.0003 percent and 0.0025 percent. An individual in the U.S. is more likely to be struck by lightning than commit voter fraud. Voter fraud does not influence elections, but these laws to combat voter fraud do.

The right to vote is the most sacred and fundamental right a democracy can have. Without the right to vote, there is no true democracy. Exact match laws, voter ID laws and use-it-or-lose-it laws all unfairly restrict black voters' rights. We need to be promoting the right to vote, not restricting it.