

5-19-12

I was raised with the belief that America is a great nation and that citizens should strive to serve their country with their abilities and talents. There are many ways to be a good citizen of your country: joining the military to protect your homeland, volunteering, bettering it through your career, and participating in its elections. It is a great thing that our country gives us the freedom to choose who we want governing us, and so it is important that we exercise that right. Freedom and democracy should not be taken for granted; there are so many people around the world who yearn to overthrow their corrupt leaders but can only do so through violent protests because of their lack of democracy. While it's important for people to be involved in their federal government, it is also very important that people participate in their local government and are aware of all the ways their local officials influence their lives.

A couple months after I turned 18, I voted for the first time; the issue being voted on was whether or not our school district should have its excess levy renewed. I went with my mom to the Baldwin Town Hall and registered to vote. Even though it was only one thing I was voting for, it felt good to know I was participating in my local government.

Doing research on my township proved to be fascinating and educational. Baldwin Township was organized in 1858 and named after commissioner, F. E. Baldwin. In 1880, the Baldwin population was 256. Today, the Baldwin government serves close to 6,000 residents. The Baldwin Township Board is in charge of creating and maintaining a local budget and creating ordinances. These decisions keep peace and order within our township. One way of keeping order is the annual township cleanup day, as it allows its residents to have a convenient and clean way to dispose of their junk. Without this event, there might be more discarding of unwanted items in ditches. Local governments also handle things like safety through fire departments, animal control, and the police departments. Education is handled largely by a local government also, like the Princeton School Board. Local school boards make decisions like how money should be spent in the school system. In a few years, most of the Princeton students will probably be using school issued iPads within their curriculum, and that will be because of local government decisions. Local governments also fund community projects, like parks and bike trails. While our federal government makes certain blanketing laws, the states have individual law making authority, along with local governments. While local and state government are less powerful and smaller than the federal government, they are still very important, as they impact citizens' lives in just as many ways.



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