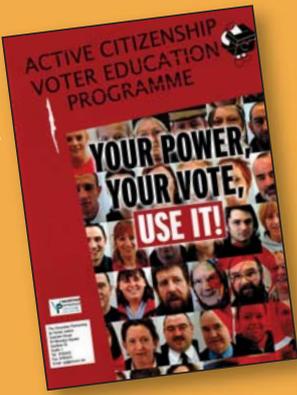


Our Vote, Our Voice



The Active Citizenship/Voter Education Programme is a U.S. National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, NETWORK Washington's effort to educate and organise people to confidently and actively participate in the political process affecting their lives. The Vincentian Partnership for Justice has adapted, with permission, the NETWORK programme for use in Ireland. The programme has run with a dedicated concentration on many disadvantaged areas in Dublin, and indeed throughout Ireland with many various groups, including many Traveller groups.

1. Voting is the cornerstone of a democracy and part of good citizenship but sadly far too many people are not voting. Many people in Ireland are alienated from the democratic electoral process. They do not see the point in voting. In fact many people are choosing not to vote because they believe that their vote, their voice has no impact. Also there is very little effort being made by social and political thinkers in Ireland today to both recognise and deal with this low turn-out. Limited participation in voting means a limited voice, limited influence, limited resources and limited change for an area.
2. These days most of us take voting for granted but it has not always been so easy. In Ireland and in other countries people had to struggle to get the vote. Although voting is one of your rights, that right had to be fought for. In history many different groups were denied the vote. For these citizens participation in the voting was achieved through years of struggle.
3. People have died and have been imprisoned while fighting for the basic human right to vote. We are benefitting from the

hard work of voter rights activists. We owe it to them, to each other, to our community and country to vote in every election. Each and every vote is the voice of an Irish citizen. One voice speaking out can change the course of human history. One vote can and will make a difference. Sadly many people do not bother to vote in elections in Ireland. Our vote is our voice, our opportunity to contribute to the common good, the good of all Irish people. If you want change it is important to vote.

4. Our vote is our voice, our opportunity to contribute to the common good, the good of all Irish people.
 - In Ireland today few people are voting – voters make things happen – if you want change it is important to vote.
 - Low voting areas lose out – high voting areas benefit and get more attention from politicians.
 - We are responsible for the kind of politicians we get – Don't complain if you don't vote.
 - 6 out of 10 people elect our politicians – if you are not one of these it's important to register.
 - People struggled to get the vote. Some people still do not have the right to vote. In Ireland we should be responsible and exercise our vote.
 - Everyone is equal on Election Day – We all have one vote – the richest and most powerful – the poorest and most disadvantaged.



Our Vote Counts, Use it

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Various circumstances and attitudes over many years past have meant that Travellers were excluded from participating in the political life of this country, and ensured that Travellers would not have a voice in who would be elected, or a say in what policies should be in place. We now have the opportunity to vote and to change this situation, by registering and voting in both the general and local elections. We have a right to vote, but we need to exercise this right. Otherwise we are staying silent while things get worse for Travellers, when we could have some say in stopping it.

WHY VOTE?

A few votes can make a big difference between someone being elected and not being elected. It also gives you a voice to support the people who are trying to do something positive for

Travellers, and it gives you a voice to vote against politicians who are anti Travellers. Although one vote does not sound like much, when there are a number of Travellers in an area, this gives local Travellers much more power, and politicians are much more likely to listen to what local Travellers have to say. When you look at this on a national level this gives the wider Traveller community a very powerful voice. In the past a lot of excluded groups had to fight for the right to vote, such as the Black community, Women, and many other groups.

We have this right but we need to mobilise it and give the community a voice in the political life of this country. We need to get Travellers to register and to vote, as campaign managers get the list of people who voted. So it is not enough to register, you must vote as well.

There is a General Election at this time. This will be followed by Local Elections. It is absolutely essential that we get as many Travellers as possible to register to vote, and to vote when the election happens.

How to **VOTE**

Make sure your name is on the Register of Electors, which you can check in your local post office or local authority. If it is not there, you can put your name on the Supplementary Register of Electors in your local authority, up to 15 days before an election.

Make sure you register to vote!