

So many of us take the right and privilege of voting for granted, yet we have only to look across the globe to see how many are struggling, fighting and even dying for the right to vote for their government. It is an exercise that mirrors the struggles of African Americans and women in our own nation decades ago. It is our responsibility to honor these struggles by actively engaging in the civic process by being informed voters.

Even as we send our young men and women into harm's way to secure democracy for those in foreign lands, we often take for granted that right at home. Sadly, in 2012, more 18-24 year old Americans will vote for the next American Idol than for the next American President. Many of my initiatives focus on improving voter participation in hopes of honoring the great sacrifice the men and women of the Armed Forces are making to preserve democracy for others.

One way you can honor your loved ones who have fought for this country is to join the "Vote in Honor of a Veteran" initiative. You can make it known that you want your vote to count because people you are proud of have served our country. This initiative is especially close to my heart because my dad, William Nogay, is a decorated WWII Air Force bomber pilot and a career military officer and my husband, Dorian Walker, is a decorated Vietnam Veteran. I will gladly cast my vote in May in their honor.

Not enough Kentuckians are engaging in the civic process. In the past four general elections only 48.78 percent of registered Kentucky voters have taken advantage of that right and privilege. Kentucky ranks near the bottom in civic participation nationwide, and especially among women and minorities. In 2009, Kentucky ranked 45th in the nation for the number of women holding elected office. To better understand how Kentucky is doing in this important arena, we are participating in the Civic Health Index study and so we can explore pathways to improve participation levels.

Today, I encourage everyone who is not registered to vote or not planning to vote on May 17 to remember those who fought for your right to vote and the people across the world today who are willing to lay down their lives to gain that right and privilege we often take for granted. Most people predict that the May 17 primary will have one of the lowest turnouts in history. Let's prove those people wrong.

The last day to register to vote in the May primary is April 18. You can register at your county clerk's office or by printing a registration form by clicking [here](#). Please make sure to preview your ballot and get to know the candidates by visiting www.vote.ky.gov and learn more today.