

A. Barry Rand
CEO

AARP[®]



Many of us have lived long enough to witness passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed discriminatory practices that disenfranchised African Americans from their right to vote. Some have lived long enough to have experienced that disenfranchisement. Some of us have even lived long enough to see passage of the 19th Amendment, securing a woman’s right to vote.

The U.S. has no shortage of history connected with voting challenges – 2012 is no exception. And next month, it’ll be time to vote. Early voting has already begun in many states. If you’re not voting early or by absentee ballot, resolve to be at your polling place on November 6.

In 2008, among 28 million eligible African American voters, 65 percent voted – a welcomed 5 percent jump over 2004, but not full participation. Our brief historical walk reminds us that voting is a right to be exercised and treasured. It’s our civic duty. Speak your mind. Vote!

Since 1958, AARP has lived by the motto, “To serve, not to be served.” This year we’re living that motto through a national conversation called, “You’ve Earned a Say,” about protecting and strengthening Medicare and Social Security for all beneficiaries, especially the seniors of today and tomorrow.

Elected officials in Washington were making decisions about the future of these programs behind closed doors – without us! We, the people, who vote them into office and have paid into these crucial programs, were being left out of their conversation.

Through “You’ve Earned a Say” we’re making your voices heard. Nearly four million people have participated in a “You’ve Earned a Say” conversation. At events across the country, people have been expressing how they value Social Security and Medicare, and the kinds of changes that make sense to them.

They’ve also heard about proposals being discussed for both programs and the pros and cons of each proposal – all presented by independent experts – and they’ve filled out questionnaires outlining their opinions.

Recently, we fulfilled our commitment to take the voice of the people to elected officials. Before the first presidential debate, AARP volunteers delivered more than 200,000 petitions to both the Democratic and Republican National Committees calling for President Obama and Governor Romney to give voters straight talk about how they plan to strengthen Medicare and Social Security for the future.

Volunteers also delivered a report entitled, “Americans Have Their Say about Medicare and Social Security,” showing the opinions of over two million people who filled out “You’ve Earned a Say” questionnaires. National and state-specific reports were also delivered to presidential and congressional candidates, and sitting lawmakers.

We’re looking to hear more from the electorate between now and Election Day, as AARP sponsors presidential and vice presidential debate festivals and debate watch parties. We’re also sponsoring more than 40 congressional and gubernatorial debates.

Every eligible voter should be registering or re-confirming their registration. And each voter should be making sure they have the information they need to make informed decisions at the polls. Go to earnedasay.org to read AARP’s Voters’ Guides and learn where the candidates stand on Social Security, Medicare and financial security in their own words.

Voter registration deadlines are coming quickly. Don’t wait, register now. New laws in some states require certain forms of identification. Contact your state election board. Make sure you have what you need. Don’t pass up your right to vote.

'Your Right. Your Decision. Your Vote.'

Written by A. Barry Rand, AARP
Thursday, 11 October 2012 12:57

At 50+, we've experienced a lot. On November 6, make sure you exercise your right to vote.