



DEI *Perspectives*

International Day of Democracy – September 15

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International Day of Democracy is on September 15, and this day provides us with an opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world. It celebrates the values of democracy as a way for everyone to participate in public discussions on what is important to them. And on International Day of Democracy, we can also take a moment to reflect upon our personal role in actively supporting and participating in the democratic process that impacts all communities in which we are a part. The values of freedom, respect for human rights and holding periodic and fair elections where everyone is invited to vote are some of the essential elements of democracy.

Democracy is as much a journey as it is a destination, but the most important aspect at the core of every democracy is that everyone is given a voice. When people engage in the democratic process, they have a say in the decisions that influence their lives and the communities where they reside. Although people's political beliefs vary along a wide spectrum, the core principles of democracy possess numerous unique features that are desirable for the health and prosperity of society and the people it represents. Countries with democratic governments tend to be more prosperous and foster human development, as measured by the health, education, personal income and other indicators seen in the people that reside in those countries.

Democracy helps people protect their interests, guarantees its citizens' fundamental rights and ensures them a broader range of personal freedoms. In a democracy, there is also a high level of political equality which can have a more profound impact on protecting and advancing the rights of everyone living in that democracy, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical or mental abilities, religious beliefs, etc.

How Democracy Plays a Role in Credit Unions

Democracy is also a key part of the credit union movement. Cooperative principle number two for credit unions is "democratic member control." The basis of this principle is that credit unions are democratic organizations owned and controlled by their members. Each member gets one vote, no matter their financial status, to help make the organization's policies and decisions. Credit unions are run as a democracy, so the members have a say in how it operates. Members vote on a volunteer board of directors and all votes weigh the same, regardless of the amount of money in a member's account.

Volunteering for Democracy

Since democracy is a cooperative principle, we wanted to provide volunteer options that you can help keep democracy alive. Whether you volunteer to be on the board of your local credit union or help get out the vote, you can find an option that fits your schedule and benefits those in your community!



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- **Help people register to vote.** Vote 411 (<https://www.vote411.org/>) has excellent resources to ensure you're registered to vote, you know your ballot and you can help others register to vote. It can be as easy as sharing their social media posts to remind your friends and family to check their registration!
- **Volunteer as a poll worker.** The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (<https://www.eac.gov/help-america-vote>) has resources to prepare and register to be a poll worker. You may even get to hand out the "I Voted" stickers if your polling location has them.
- **Helping people vote by emergency vote.** You can contact your local hospital to see if they need volunteers to help people vote. When you know you're going to be in hospital, you can register for an absentee ballot ahead of time. Unfortunately, many people find themselves in last-minute stays and need to vote by emergency ballot. You can see if your local hospital needs help with registration, witnessing, notarizing or submitting these emergency ballots. Check out <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/hospitals-help-patients-get-out-the-vote-while-stuck-in-bed> for more info. You can also donate to your local voter's league or to [Vot+ER](#), a group that helps hospitals organize emergency voting.

Don't forget to check your registration and prepare to vote on or by November 5!