

I am the luckiest person in the world when it comes to my dream job. Ever since high school I have had two passions: politics and law enforcement. My current position allows me to participate in both worlds.

One of my favorite family photographs, which I display proudly at home, is of me at about the age of 12 with my two sisters. On my shirt is a button that reads "Nixon's the One."

My interest in politics continued as I got older. At age 18, I attended my first caucus and was elected to go to the Jefferson County Assembly. Because of this strong interest in the political process, I place high value on the right to vote.

As you read this article, you have until 7 p.m. to exercise your right to vote. Despite this being an off-year election, we as a community still have many important issues to decide. Unfortunately, many residents who are eligible to vote take it for granted and don't bother.

The right to vote did not come easy for many Americans. At the time of ratification, our Constitution did not extend the right to vote to all. Two centuries ago, voters were a select group of white men. With a few exceptions, everyone today has the right to vote. In total there are 50 states, 3,141 counties and numerous local elections, each with unique statutes and laws. In four states, ex-felons are barred from voting for life; however, Maine and Vermont allow those in jail to partake in the voting process.

Because the right to vote is not passed simply in the bloodstream, I taught my children never to take it for granted.

On my son's 18th birthday, the first thing we did was go to the post office to register for the selective service. The next stop was the clerk and recorder's office, where he became a registered voter. We did these two things even before opening presents or enjoying the ice cream and cake, because the right to vote is the greater gift.

By taking the time to vote, you as an individual have the power to speak your mind and help ensure candidates who represent your values and ideas are elected or re-elected.

Whom you choose for mayor and city council affects the direction of Greeley for many years to come.

You also have the power to express your opinion on a variety of ballot issues pertaining to new taxes and ordinances, depending on where you live. Some elections can be very close and often can be decided by just a few votes. If you don't vote, you allow others to determine the direction of our community.

Don't put off voting this year. It may be easy to vote out a lousy candidate in a few years, but some ballot issues have long-term ramifications. With 2007 being an off year, voter

turnout might be light, which means the vast majority of residents will have to live with the decisions made by just a few.

If you are uncertain of where to vote, call the Weld County Clerk and Recorder's Election Office at 304-6525, Ext. 3070, or visit www.weldsheriff.com for a link to the voting center page.

Please take a few moments to make your voice heard today and for years to come by simply casting your vote. If you have a child turning 18 today, it's not too late for him or her to register; the cake and ice cream will still be there when you get home.

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