encouraging students to disengage from the political process? He then explained that when fewer people vote, his own vote counts more. This makes sense. Though his vote only still counts as one, if the number of total received votes declines, his vote would have more weight. Contained here is one very simple argument. By not voting, you are not only failing to voice your own opinion, you are also increasing the strength of every other vote. This reason alone was enough to change my mind about the importance of voting; however, some may still be reluctant to hit the polls next election cycle.

Another reason to vote is civic duty. Civic duty, however, has been thrown around without much direction so often that it has lost most relevant meaning to most of society. Many people are told that it is their civic duty to vote, without any explanation of either what civic duty actually is or why it is important. Civic duty is simply the act of being a citizen. Being a citizen of these United States does not necessarily mean that one must vote. That being said, it is a condition of our political system that citizens participate in elections. Two days a week, I drive down to Lansing from Saginaw for my current internship with the Michigan Pharmacists' Association. This hour and a half drive in the morning allows me to surf the radio and check out the various types of entertainment that is being offered. I will listen to National Public Radio to catch up on some of the current affairs of the world. I will also listen to various music stations finding melodies that will brighten my day. Morning talk shows are another offering of the radio that I will occasionally pause on to listen to what the hosts may be chatting about. On one particular morning, I paused on a radio station that I usually try to avoid due to my disagreement with most of the opinions of the host. This day, he happened to be infuriated due to the recent budget problems the Michigan Legislature was facing and their seeming lack of action to fix the problem. This host was practically yelling, questioning where there was any accountability placed on the legislature for their amazing inaction. This brings me to my point of civic duty. Being that the legislature is only in service due to the grace of their voters, this accountability for action, or the lack of, must come from the voters. If officials are only elected due to their name or how much money they can raise, and are also only removed from office by term limits or their own ambition to achieve a higher office, then why would they accept any accountability?

One of the best sources of accountability stems from fear, and in the case of legislators, it would come from the fear of losing their office. If the average employee is assigned a task, given significant notice about the completion date and all relevant data regarding the task, and then fails to provide any sort of effort for that assignment, they would most likely be fired. Being that we, the voters, not only elected our officials, but also finance them through our taxes, logically, they are our employees. If they never actually receive any criticism or punishment for poor actions or even a complete lack of action, there is no reason for them to change their behavior. I must of course qualify this statement with the fact

that not all legislators are like this. I would assume that the majority seek and retain election for the common good stemming from their sense of decency and belief that they truly can make the world a better place. These officials should be commended for their morality, character and service to the citizens and the state. Here is the way to place that accountability that so many people seek and complain about with these officials. If you do vote, I congratulate you on completing the action that is a check on the officials that serve us. If you also suggest, guilt, bully or do anything else that encourages your friends to vote as well, I applaud you on assisting in achieving that accountability for officials. If you do not vote, then I can only ask that you do not complain about the current policies or officials, since you did not even attempt to influence the outcome.

You may be asking yourself why your vote is significant. It's just one vote among many. How can it be heard? There is an answer to this question. Once legislators are elected, if they are smart, they will look at the polling data. They will check the categories of who voted for them, and even more importantly, who voted against them. Each legislator has a few priorities when they take office. Among those is usually reelection. A legislator may see that they captured the youth vote, however, they received almost no female vote. They will keep this in mind for their entire term until the next election. They will seek to fight for policies that will both solidify their previous votes, yet also attempt to win over some opposing votes. This way, each vote is part of a percentage of various categories that legislators will evaluate. Age, race, religion, gender, income and education are some examples of the way your one vote can be broken down and influence a legislator. Officials will rarely even glance over the category that did not vote, figuring that if they did not vote in the previous election, they likely will not vote in the next election either. Rather than attempt to motivate a new vote, it would seem much easier to change an existing vote. Therefore, the only individuals ignored by the political process are those who disenfranchise themselves by not voting.

If a specific official is really upsetting, there are some strategies to make your one vote more important and have a better chance of actually removing an incumbent, which is a current office holder running for reelection. Incumbents win a vast majority of races based solely on name recognition and the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mentality. There are two types of districts: safe and contested. In safe districts, a majority of like-minded voters live in the district, and elections usually turn out the same way. My home district has voted for and elected Democrats since long before I followed politics. This would be considered a safe district, meaning a Republican has a very small chance to win the election in that district. In a safe district, the best way to influence a vote is in the primary election. Primary elections happen when multiple candidates run from the same political party for the same seat to represent that party in the general election. Most notable are the presidential primaries, where candidates