

EDITORIAL:

Region voter turnout looking up, still much room for improvement

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Doug Ross - May 5, 2016



The good news is that about double the percentage of region voters cast ballots in the Tuesday primary compared to primaries of recent years.

The bad news is a majority of Northwest Indiana's registered voters still stayed away from the polls, abdicating a central right and responsibility of living in a democratic republic.

Election workers in Lake, Porter and LaPorte county polls reported steady streams of voters throughout the day Tuesday.

In Lake County, about 34 percent of registered voters selected either a Republican or Democratic ballot to vote for their preferred party nominees in county, state, judicial or federal elections, the county's elections board reported.

That's nearly twice the 17 percent of registered voters who cast ballots in the 2015 municipal primary.

Porter County saw a 40 percent turnout of registered voters this year, and 35 percent of LaPorte County voters hit the polls Tuesday, according to officials in those counties.

Pat Gabrione, Lake County's assistant elections director, dubbed his county's turnout "fabulous" Wednesday, noting anemic primary voting since the whopping 50 percent-plus voter participation in the highly charged 2008 presidential primary.

In one sense, Gabrione is right. Those who helped improve the Region's voter turnout Tuesday should be proud, regardless of their political affiliations or choices.

But the numbers also show us less than half of Northwest Indiana voters bothered to exercise their fundamental rights.

Some might complain about the quality of candidates. Others might claim they were too busy to vote. Still others may lament the Indiana primary voting requirement essentially forcing voters to declare a party as being too limiting.

The system isn't perfect, but no amount of excuses make right a citizenry that has a choice and fails to exercise it.

For those who stayed away from the primary polls, it's not too late to make it right in 2016. The November general election will be the final referendum on the presidential race as well as the same local elections featured in the primary.

Let's all work to keep our voter turnout numbers moving in the right direction.

The Times Editorial Board

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