

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness      September 10, 1998

**Primary Elections: Don't forget to vote**

"Just remember," an experienced politician said to me when I was a first-time candidate, "you think your race is important. But the public will not contemplate the election until after Labor Day."

I thought of that advice this week as the political commercials began to pick up in frequency and intensity now that September is here. Newspaper stories over the weekend voiced an even stronger warning: Will the electorate tune in at all in time to vote in next week's primary?

Because of quirks in the calendar, the Massachusetts primary election date falls only one week after Labor Day, rather than the usual two-week delay. This week's Byline is an early reminder that the statewide primary election is next Tuesday, September 15. The polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. Let's carry on the Longmeadow tradition of high participation in the electoral process and vote.

The primary election establishes the November candidates for both the Democratic and Republican ballots, and we lose our voice in setting those priorities by sitting out that election. Anyone who is registered in a specific party can vote in that party's primary election; anyone who has not declared a party can select either ballot.

It is too late to register as a new voter for the primary, but if you have missed the deadline for this election, take this opportunity to register for the final election in November. My interest in electoral participation stems from different considerations. As a student of politics I have observed pundits lamenting the loss of voter interest. I watch as pollsters claim to know what the voters want, and see them surprised repeatedly the morning after an election. Don't let pollsters determine our future.

As an elected official, of course I want to have the highest participation of voters. And I have often seen the difference that can be made by a vote. Both Congressional and gubernatorial elections have recently turned on a handful of votes. And just last year a town election was determined by a single vote.

Some of us have been following this year's state campaigns since the two parties held their springtime conventions. Some may have tuned in for the recent televised debates. The rest of us have only a week to make our decisions.

Let's all of us confound the so-called experts who talk of apathy, disaffection and indifference. Say with our votes that Longmeadow cares - Longmeadow votes.