

# Can You Vote in U.S. Elections?

As the world waits nervously for George W. Bush's next move, the United States is gearing up for important mid-term Congressional elections this November. With the Democrats holding a single-seat majority in the Senate and the Republicans holding a slim majority in the House of Representatives, a small number of votes could have a huge impact on the balance of power in the U.S. And as the world's only remaining superpower, political changes in the U.S. have effects far beyond American borders.

While Canadians often lament the influence America has on us, in this case some Canadians can have a big influence on the U.S. Unlike Canada, the U.S. allows American citizens living abroad to vote in American elections. But though approximately 300,000 Americans living in Canada are eligible to vote, in past U.S. elections barely 2,000 have registered and voted through absentee ballot.

A small percentage of those absentee ballots, cast in the right states, would have been enough to reverse the result of the 2000 presidential election, so that Al Gore, and not George W. Bush, would be in the White House. Even if you are not a fan of Al Gore, there is a big difference, for Canadians as well as for Americans, between a Democratic and a Republican administration.

A Gore Administration would have ratified the Kyoto Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, Bush shows his contempt for environmental issues by boycotting the environmental summit in Johannesburg. He has squandered Medicare and Social Security trust funds to pay for a tax cut for the rich. As the United States, and possibly the rest of the world, slides toward recession in the wake of corporate crime wave, Bush's own financial background hampers his ability to react with much more than a series of photo ops. When our jobs are at stake, he can only talk about Iraq.

A secure Democratic majority in the House would provide a rational check on Bush's worst tendencies. It would make it virtually impossible for him to set his own hard-right agenda, which includes pushing anti-choice Supreme Court nominees.

So, if you are an American citizen living in Canada, even if you hold dual U.S.-Canadian citizenship or know someone who does, you can find out how to participate in the American elections through the Democrats Abroad website at <http://ca.democratsabroad.org>. Your vote can make a difference.

