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A Message from the Office of the Commissioner

## VOTE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

*“Why should I vote? Those politicians don’t listen to me.”*

*“They don’t care about me. They do whatever they want to do anyway.”*

*“What difference is my vote going to make?”*

*“I don’t have time. Besides, what does my one little vote mean?”*

Sound familiar? Heard these words a little too often?

November 4<sup>th</sup> is Election Day here in CT and the rest of the country. All registered voters will have the opportunity to cast their votes for president, congress, state senators and state representatives. How these individuals will pay attention to issues like health care, access to services, transportation, social security, employment, Section 8, other housing initiatives, community reentry from hospitals or prisons, and recovery and peer supports is going to matter a great deal during these difficult economic times.

Coming to the Capitol and asking for Medicaid spend down reform, re-entry services, employment opportunities, private provider COLA and housing, will be difficult in the next few years. The economy is in trouble and that usually means the behavioral health community will not get what it needs. Heck, some might argue we don’t get what we need in good times.

What’s an advocate to do? Well, you can certainly sit home and watch it all happen without you, complain when nothing changes or *you can vote and make a difference*. In the 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy won the total popular vote over Richard M. Nixon by merely 118,000 votes. That translates into approximately 2,220 votes per state. It looks to me like some folks that year actually did *vote and make a difference!* In a 1984 congressional race after numerous recounts, the Indiana race was won by 4 votes. Once again a few *votes made a difference*. In 1994 a race for a US Senate seat in New Hampshire was ultimately decided by 2 votes and in November of 2000, the Pennsylvania Speaker of the House was re-elected by 92 votes. Some people did *vote and make a difference*. And...from personal experience, in 1982, a young activist from Waterbury beat an incumbent state representative by 132 votes. That young activist went out the next morning after that election and waved to people with a big thank you sign in her arms because people in her district did *vote and make a difference*.

Will they return your phone calls? Will they answer your letters, listen to your concerns, vote the way you would like them to? Maybe, but the chances of that happening if you stay home on Election Day go down considerably. On November 4<sup>th</sup>, please . . .

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