

IN MY OPINION

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The nitty-gritty of patriotism

March 14, 2002

Okay, let's get down to brass tacks. We've all been flying flags since September 11th. We see American flags flapping outside of cars, waving outside of homes, posted in windows along with placards and marquees declaring, "United we stand" or "God bless America." Supposedly, patriotism is at an all time high.

However, many of us have flown our flags and felt patriotic our whole lives. Americans continue to fight and die to protect our freedoms and those of other countries.

But isn't it too bad planes have to crash into buildings in New York City and the Pentagon and the fields of Pennsylvania for us to appreciate what we have in these United States of America? Our country isn't perfect, but at least we have the hardfought freedom to change things we don't like, to express ourselves, for the most part, without retribution, to question our governments and elect representatives in free and mostly unfettered elections. So what do the rest of us do to protect these freedoms?

Well, it isn't enough to fly flags. It isn't enough to leave flowers by pictures of those who have died in terrorist attacks or in war. It isn't enough to give blood to the Red Cross or send food to Afghanistan. It isn't enough to give millions of dollars to the survivors of terrorist victims. It isn't

enough to give lip service to our amazing representative Democracy form of government.

In order to stay free, we have to constantly work to keep good government. If we want a government of the people and by the people, the people can't just sit on their thumbs and watch the world go by.

And that means, at the very least, we have to vote.

If some of our citizens have the guts to fight and die for this country, we ought to at least have the guts to vote in the March 19th Primary Election, where our political parties choose their nominees for the General Election next November. And spare me that whiney excuse that you don't want to choose a Republican or Democrat ballot because someone might label you or know your party affiliation. This, folks, is a major cop-out. Most people don't give a rip what ballot we take. Choosing one or another of these ballots doesn't mean we are not independent. It doesn't reveal who we have voted for or will in November.

It does mean we are willing to take part in a critical part of our political process - that we are doing our part to keep our country strong and free.

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