

Vote Down MS



When I was 7 years old, my mom was diagnosed with relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis, but I never actually realized what was happening to her. I was a young kid with a normal mom who just happened to have MS. However, when I was 15, my mom came home from an appointment with her neurologist, and I finally understood what MS was. For the first time I could remember, my mom's MS had progressed, and there was no way I could stop it.

No one wants to see anyone suffer, but it is especially hard to know your mom struggles every day with a disease that currently has no cure. My mom has always been – and will continue to be – one of the strongest and biggest inspirations of my life, but realizing what she deals with everyday motivated me to do more. I started asking what I could do to ease the burdens my mom faced. I helped more around the house. I let her hold my arm when she felt unstable. But I still couldn't change my mom's MS.

During the past year, I've had a couple of opportunities to affect the future of MS. On two occasions, I met directly with members of Congress or their staff, and I've participated in a meeting with White House staff members. The second opportunity was a little more subtle. Last November, I checked a few boxes, sealed an envelope, and sent my voice to our government. Last November was my first election as an adult. When you turn 18, you become a part of the American government. When I mailed my ballot in, I felt the power I had to drive change, no matter how small it may seem. I no longer felt powerless in the face of MS. I highly encourage everyone to vote in every election, especially young and new voters. Together, we have the power to end MS through the vote.

As ridiculous as it seems, I changed government policy with that one vote – and no matter

what anyone says, one vote matters. Each election determines the policy for the next cycle. My one vote could elect a pro-research representative, who could be an ally to the MS cause. A single vote might not change the outcome of an election, but my vote shows I care about the policy. Even if the candidate I vote for loses the election, the number of losing votes pressures the winner of an election to consider the philosophy of the loser.

Every vote influences the ideology of our government. Every office determines policy. Every election at every level is important.

There are billions of people on this earth who do not have influence over their governments. Don't waste your opportunity. You **can** control American policy through the vote. You **can** voice your opinion with one vote. And when we all vote, **We can** end MS through government funded research, changes to the medical system, and support for the disability community.

If you want to do more or are younger than 18 but still want to be involved, talk to your local politicians. Ask to meet them in person. When politicians see a young activist, it sticks with them. A young activist shows the seriousness of the issue and separates you from the flood of activists they see every day. Also, today's politicians are on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media; so reach out to them. Currently, the MS Society is using #whenyourparenthasMS. Let's flood social media with stories that force politicians to remember the MS community and the challenges we face every day. Be the change, be visible, and be involved. Our generation can be the generation that ends MS. Please join me and use your voice.