Natalie Kolosieke

The 2020 election is taking place during one of the most uncertain times in my life, and even when the debate rhetoric, tweets, and health concerns for the candidates are overwhelming, I have an anchor. When I was growing up, I learned a little prayer that I use as a mantra to this day: “grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” I can’t change the economy, or the healthcare situation, not the electoral college or the people in this nation, but I can vote. In fact, it is my duty as a citizen of this flawed country to vote for the candidates that I believe will make it better. From President down to the Soil and Conservation District Supervisor, my vote is my voice. We are obligated as eligible voters to speak up for those who have no say.

In my home state, we are choosing the next Superintendent of Public Instruction this election, which is incredibly important this year. She will be responsible for overseeing the transition back to the classroom, the programs and methods for catching students up to their grade level after lost class time, and helping every school get the funding it needs to come out of this pandemic even stronger. I spent the first few months of quarantine with my sister, who was halfway through her first year of teaching at the time, and didn’t even know how she was going to be teaching after spring break. I saw the endless meetings, the assignments and activities she put together to keep her students engaged, and the daily check-ins she had with her students as well as their guardians. I also understand how difficult it is to learn from home. I want what’s best for the people in our state, and I want our Superintendent to do the same.

“The personal is political” is a great phrase, but this year it’s more accurate to say that the political is personal. It isn’t just that our identities are politically based; it’s how much closer to home political decisions are. Elected officials were making decisions that won’t affect us for two years, or are things we hardly notice in our daily lives, but with a pandemic their decisions are more to the point. A stimulus check is the difference between heating and food for some people. Who we vote for matters, *that* we vote matters. Before the pandemic, voting didn’t seem as important to me because I was largely unaffected by it. As I get older I’ve begun to see more and more how entwined even small political decisions are with my daily life. I never expected any of this to happen, and oftentimes I avoided talking about politics to keep the peace, but I know better now. Voting in the 2020 election means finding my voice, it means speaking up and staying involved.