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## Introduction

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Our theme for this issue is the erosion and renewal of democratic life. As Rachelle Darabi has articulated in her essay, we are all feeling a sense of erosion, and we struggle to understand what renewal looks like. All of our efforts at the *eJournal of Public Affairs* aim to bring you a variety of forms and perspectives about the intersection of public life and higher education. This time our work comes at a moment of particular urgency. We are closing in on a national election that feels more consequential than anything most of us can remember. In some U.S. states, the process of voting by mail has already begun.

Even in the context of such a momentous election, however, we want to remind all citizens that serving in public office – or voting for those who do – is just one way to make a difference in public life on the issues that matter most to you. Other avenues exist to leverage individual and group resources for the greater good. Some citizens create businesses or not-for-profit organizations to aim at specific areas that affect us all, like energy, or advocacy, or the development of products to improve public deliberation, for example. Institutions of civil society have public purpose as well, like our churches and schools. In this issue we highlight a range of efforts for civic engagement. Like every issue of *EJOPA*, this issue brings you scholarship, reviews, commentary and stories to expand the understanding and narrative of public affairs.

Along with scholarly insights and educational materials we include expressions of practice. In *Tell Your Story*, we share two Missouri State University initiatives for voter engagement. Emphasizing solutions, we invite other universities, institutions, and communities to share their ideas and projects for engaging students, faculty, and citizens/community members. We are also excited about our *Student Voices* section, and we encourage scholarship and reflective commentary from students. Finally, we provide recommendations and resource links to guide or assist informed engagement during this election season, and for the work that must always follow participation at the ballot box. The work of democratic renewal goes on.

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