

2nd Place

7th – 8th Grade

22nd Annual Student Essay Contest | Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum

How to Keep Democracy Strong: The Rules and Problems We Face

Hey there! Did you know that the United States is a democracy? This means that we have a system in place where we can work through our differences by talking and voting. We can choose what we want our government to do. And, as Mayor Holt of Oklahoma City said, "In America, there is no reason to use violence."

But to make sure our democracy works well, there are some important values we need to have. For example, it's important to follow the laws and treat everyone fairly. We need to respect the rule of law. This means that all citizens, regardless of their political beliefs, must abide by the laws and regulations set by the government. This helps to prevent violence and ensures that everyone is treated equally.

Another important value is tolerance. In a democratic society, citizens must be able to tolerate the opinions and beliefs of others, even if they do not agree with them. This allows for open and honest debate, which is essential for making informed decisions through the democratic process. We need to be able to listen to others and understand their point of view, even if we don't agree.

Freedom of speech and press are also essential for a functioning democratic society. Citizens must be able to express their opinions and ideas freely, without fear of repression or censorship. A free and independent press also plays a crucial role in holding those in power accountable and providing citizens with accurate information. We need to be able to say what we think and have journalists who can tell us the truth.

However, even though democracy is great, there are still some challenges that can make it not work so well. One of the biggest challenges is the rise of extremism and political polarization. When people are too extreme in their ideas, they might not want to listen to others or find a solution that works for everyone. This can lead to a breakdown in dialogue and compromise, and make it harder to solve problems.

Another challenge to democracy is the spread of misinformation and the manipulation of public opinion through social media. When people share fake news or try to trick us, it can make it hard to know what's really going on. This can also make it harder for us to make informed decisions through the democratic process.

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And, let's not forget about corruption and the abuse of power. When those in power use their position for personal gain, they undermine the principle of equality and fair treatment under the law. They might not do what's best for everyone, but what's best for themselves. This is not okay.

So, what can we do to help our democracy stay strong? Well, it's important for us to stay informed about what's going on and get involved in our communities. We can participate in elections and civic organizations, and speak out against corruption and abuse of power. We need to make sure that those in power are doing what's best for everyone.

In conclusion, Mayor Holt's quote highlights the importance of peaceful resolution of differences through democratic processes in a functioning democratic society. Maintaining this principle requires upholding values such as respect for the rule of law, tolerance, freedom of speech and press, and a commitment to fighting against challenges such as extremism, polarization, corruption, and the manipulation of public opinion. By staying informed and engaged, citizens can play an important role in promoting and protecting the democratic principles that make our society strong. We need to do our part to make sure that our democracy stays strong and works well for everyone.