Prompt 1: [1 minute] Why should voting matter in American democracy? Why might some say that it doesn't matter?

Voting matters in American democracy because it is the cornerstone of a representative government, allowing citizens to have a voice in the political process and influence policy decisions. Through voting, people can elect leaders who align with their values and help shape the country's future. Furthermore, voting helps maintain the legitimacy of the government by ensuring that those in power are elected by the people and are accountable to them.

However, some might argue that voting doesn't matter due to various factors that they believe undermine the democratic process. These include the electoral college system, which can lead to a candidate winning the presidency despite losing the popular vote; gerrymandering, which manipulates electoral boundaries to favor one party; and the influence of money in politics, which can disproportionately amplify the voices of wealthy individuals and corporations.

Prompt 2: [2 minutes] Why should every citizen have the opportunity to vote? How have some citizens been kept away from the polls in the past? What are potential barriers to people who want to vote today?

Every citizen should have the opportunity to vote because it is a fundamental right that ensures equal representation and participation in the democratic process. By allowing all citizens to vote, the government can better serve the needs and interests of its diverse population, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

In the past, certain citizens were kept away from the polls through various tactics specifically designed to disenfranchise African Americans and other minority groups. These tactics included literacy tests, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses, which effectively suppressed the voting rights of these populations. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was instrumental in addressing these discriminatory practices, but challenges persist.

Today, potential barriers to voting include restrictive voter ID laws, which can disproportionately impact low-income, elderly, or minority voters who may not have the required identification; voter roll purges that can erroneously remove eligible voters; limited access to polling places and reduced voting hours, leading to long wait times; and the absence of early or mail-in voting options in some states, which can make it difficult for people with work or family commitments to participate in elections.

Prompt 3: [1-2 minutes] Does it matter that voter fraud is actually very rare, especially since fraud always could potentially happen in the future? Why can it be hard to BOTH strongly secure elections against potential fraud AND provide assured access to every eligible voter who wants to vote during elections?

The rarity of voter fraud should not be dismissed, as even the potential for fraud can undermine public confidence in the electoral process. However, it is crucial to recognize the balance between securing elections against fraud and ensuring access for every eligible voter. Implementing overly strict measures to prevent fraud can have unintended consequences, disproportionately impacting certain populations such as low-income, elderly, or minority voters, who may lack the necessary identification or resources to navigate restrictive voting processes.

Achieving the balance between securing elections and providing assured access to every eligible voter can be difficult due to the need to maintain the integrity of elections while also accommodating the diverse needs of the electorate. The challenge lies in implementing measures that effectively deter fraud without creating unnecessary barriers to voting for eligible citizens. This delicate balance requires thoughtful policy design, informed public discourse, and ongoing vigilance to prevent disenfranchisement and ensure that every voice is heard in the democratic process.