WE'RE STILL HERE! ... AND WE VOTE!

It sounds a little threatening, doesn’t it? Not voting or expressing our opinions about our countries’ policies can threaten us. We must vote, knowing that in some countries polio survivors can’t.

People with disabilities are of all political persuasions. Some are liberal, some are conservative. A few of my post-polio friends are libertarians. Many others declare their independent status to be sure politicians of one party or another won’t take our collective support for granted or just write us off.

How you vote is your decision and yours alone.

But, how do we know what we hear in a sound bite or read on the Internet is true? Who does the talking-head expert really represent? Will one party cut Medicare more than another? How will the candidates’ ideas affect those with pre-existing conditions?

It is up to each of us to vote, armed with the confidence that our selections are based on facts and that they represent our personal philosophies. Our choice will help determine who will be the decision makers about our future quality of life as polio survivors and as citizens of the world.

Take the time to search for information from reputable non-partisan groups. For example, in the United States, Factcheck.org carefully analyzes claims made by candidates and elected officials. The League of Women voters (www.vote411.org) focuses on registering people to vote and to educating voters about national, state and local elections.

Polio survivor Justin Dart used to remind us: “Vote as if your life depends on it. Because it does.” PHI agrees and strongly encourages you to be involved in the process in your country.

We want to help you take action.

The August issue of Post-Polio Health will include an eye-catching form letter that you can mail to your sitting legislators and hopeful candidates. It will inform them about polio and its survivors and enumerate the major issues facing the post-polio population worldwide.

Help us create the list. What is your greatest concern? What issues should we list to educate our legislators about our needs? Send them to info@post-polio.org or call 314-534-0475 by July 2, 2012.

You will be able to add your personal message and let the people in power know that WE'RE STILL HERE! Watch www.post-polio.org and the PHI Membership Memo for updates.

Joan L. Headley, Executive Director, PHI