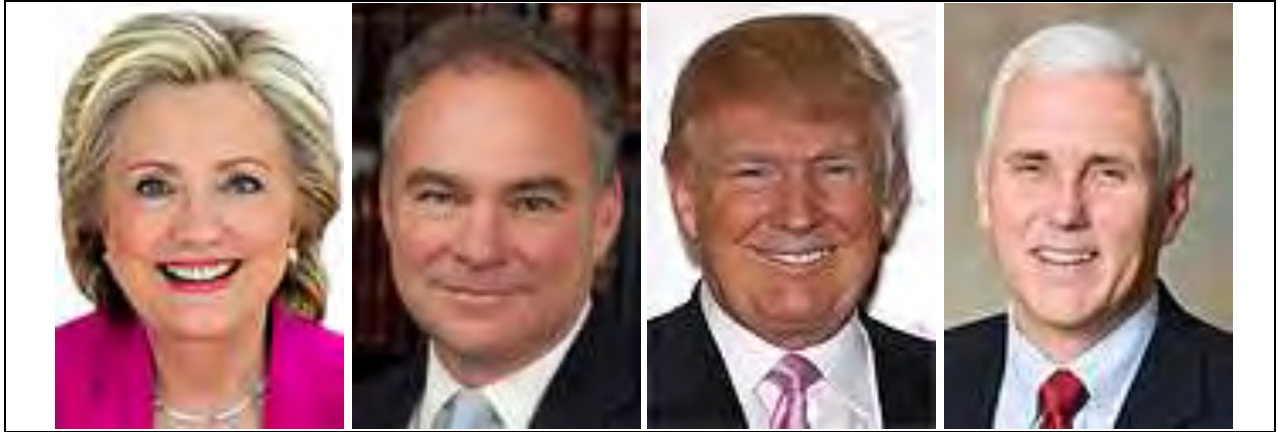


Voting

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It's less than two weeks until America will choose a new President. My telephone keeps ringing with recorded ads for the different candidates. The one new adage this year is that everyone is sending giant postcards instead of the usual size flyers. But the thing that hasn't changed whether it be Trump vs. Hillary or the local dog catcher race is that the candidates don't talk much about themselves, their policies or what they will bring to the office. Nearly every ad is simply communicating to anyone who will listen, what is wrong with their opponent.

There is a strong ethic in America that voting is a privilege, a gift from God and the Founding Fathers and is a huge responsibility. Americans would laugh when they heard that the voter turnout in one of the Communist Countries was something like 98%. Our understanding is that there would be dire consequences if a citizen in the Soviet Union or China chose not to vote. And no one in the Western World would believe these statistics anyway.

So one question in America is why our turnout totals are getting lower and lower in every election. Grant it that in a presidential year (such as Obama's first election in 2008 or our current election in 2016) the totals will certainly increase. But in off-year elections and especially in off-year primaries, the turnout percentages have been significantly lower than 50%.

I have been asking elected officials what it will take to inspire our young people to vote without getting any satisfactory answers. I have 5 college graduate children who have never voted albeit that I have voted in just about every election, being it primary or general election for the past 50 years. In 1960 at the age of 13 I sat and watched the Kennedy-Nixon returns all night noting every shift in the numbers. From 1990 to 2010 I ran every two years for a minor community position and in 1998 I ran for a major county office. Thus my children were exposed to politics much more than in the average household. Yet they have continually chosen not to cast their ballots.

When I convey this fact to people they cringe and claim that this is a tragedy -- that my children have a responsibility to vote. But they choose not to vote. They feel that their time is most responsibly spent taking care of their family, their friends, their jobs, their careers, their health, the environment and their communities. Likewise, one of my neighbors expressed exactly the same sentiment when she responded by saying that she had no time for politics, that her time was most importantly spent taking care of her husband and her three children. Methinks it fundamentally comes down to trust. Our Founding Fathers

were willing to sacrifice their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor for love of country. Today many citizens question who might be our modern day Patriots.

The word politics comes from the Greek word *politis*, which means to serve the people. The word sacrifice itself comes from the Latin word “to make holy.” There is no question that our Founding Fathers sacrificed their personal desires and ambitions to give birth to a great nation that gave liberty and religious freedom to all.

Today politicians spend much of their time raising money so that they can pay for their media ads and signage. Thus the real winners every year are the media outlets and the printers. And just as bad news covers the front pages of our daily newspapers and fills the opening minutes of our nightly news programs, the ads continue to say much more about what’s wrong with one’s opponents than what’s right about the candidate themselves.

At one point as our children began to get older and started staying up later, my wife and I realized that we had to censor the nightly news, just as we had censored other inappropriate television shows in the past. In fact, we decided to only watch the news ourselves until the first murder, rape or arson story. As a result, we rarely made it past the three-minute mark in the newscast unless the lead story was weather related.

When challenged my children responded by saying, “why should I vote for someone who only tells me what’s wrong with their opponent. If I take the candidate at his word and believe what each one says about the other, I’d be a fool to vote for either one of them.”

Thus, like Diogenes, I went from elected official to elected official and I asked each one of them how I could get my own children to vote. Many just told me to be the example, but of course, I already was to no avail. Finally, one particularly righteous elected official said to me, “when your children find someone who inspires them, someone who they can believe in, then and only then will they begin to cast their ballots.

My European wife asks me “how come in a nation of 350,000,000 people, these two people who each have such high negatives are considered the best-qualified candidates to become the next President of the United States?” And sadly, I do not have an answer for her.

This year for the first time since I was twenty-one years old I will not cast my vote for President of the United States. When I tell people this they respond by saying that I must choose between the lesser of two evils. But I refuse to do this, for in my book evil is evil. Do I believe that either of the two presidential candidates will bring America closer to God? -- no I do not, thus I choose not to cast my ballot in this election.