

Anxiety, Anger, Violence, and Election Madness

On November 8th, we will, once again, see election coverage controlling our nation's headlines. Foreign policy and world peace issues have always been important campaign topics. Other issues like taxation, the national debt, education, civil rights, health care, and terrorism, will always make their appearances on the campaign trail, but we tend to see these more often included in presidential campaigns.

Though the war in the Ukraine is setting the stage for so much of the world's unrest, local and state issues tend to be centered around the more socially relevant issues. Women's rights, gun control, the economy, education, health care, and anger and violence will represent some of the campaign battlegrounds as election day approaches.

Voting has always been a right that carries tremendous responsibility, and the need to understand both the issues, and those who are campaigning about them This is imperative. Unfortunately, with all the mudslinging and backstabbing we hear from the candidates, it's difficult to understand the role that information about these campaign issues can play, and even more important, those who are trying to convince us that they are the right people for the job.

We live in a world that has become increasingly angry, and maybe of even more importance, is our willingness to accept this as a way of life. We all know that acts with anger have increased significantly in the past three years, and we can accurately list of factors that are giving life to a new and more aggressive way to live. Our threshold for anger and violence has risen, and not only do we expect it to continue, we have also begun to adjust to it as the “new norm”.

Today's elected officials, and those who are currently on the campaign trail, are using tactics that stimulate emotion, and aggressive thoughts and behaviors. It's unfortunate, but we hear more about the horrors of one's campaign opponent, than we do about the plans our candidates have to address the needs of our nation. These tactics have worked because we, ourselves, are learning to embrace style of life which has little to do with dignity, honor, and respect for each other. We are embracing the anger and the violence, and we are in danger of incorporating this type of thinking into our own voting strategies.

What follows, is a simple guide, not about which candidate to vote for, but how to vote. Voting efficiently, requires the ability to put one's emotions aside, and

acquire and examine the facts relevant to any situation. Though that does become difficult when the sources of the information aren't exactly trustworthy, that doesn't mean that we, as voters, throw in the campaign towel, and make emotional decisions. It does mean that we demand more from our candidates. We need to hold them accountable on the campaign trail, and this is how that can happen.

Ten ways to become a more intelligent voter:

1. Try to put your emotions aside, or at least attempt to reduce their impact on your ability to gather information. Emotions usually produce quick decisions, and that's exactly what politicians are looking for.
2. Fact gathering is important. Go slow. You don't need all the information right away. Take your time and acquire as much information as you can.
3. Try to stay away from being a single-issue voter. We all have those issues that are important to us, but the people you are voting for will not be taking office simply to address that one issue for you. Make a list of all the issues that are important, and that your representative can change. Don't vote solely on party lines. umm Try to be a more global-minded voter.
4. Keep an open mind. Try to stay away from getting your information from one news source. Stretch a bit on this one. Be willing to listen to the opinions you may not like. You are going to need that information as you move forward.
5. Be willing to discuss the information you are receiving with others, especially those who may not share your opinions. There may be some weak spots in the information you have compiled, and it's always better to learn about that early. You make less mistakes this way.
6. Be willing to listen and communicate openly and respectfully. This helps you as you attempt to sift through all the campaign jargon, and arrive at conclusions which have an information gathering process that is sound. It also increases your ability to communicate respectfully with others. We need that.
7. As you were listening to those who are campaigning for their respective offices, ignore the angry and accusatorial allegations they are making about their opponents. Ask them what their own plans are to efficiently represent you in the office they are seeking, on all the issues that are important to you.
8. Ask your candidate exactly how they're going to execute the plan they are communicating to you. Campaign promises have been with us for centuries.

We can't live on promises. Make sure you know that your candidate is going to do, and exactly how that's going to happen.

9. Time frames are important if your candidate has a plan, and is willing to present that plan to you for your scrutiny. You need to know when action relevant to that plan is going to begin. Also, trying to determine how long the plan will take to unfold. They're telling you they're capable, and you want to hold them accountable. This information is important.
10. As you were voting, keep the idea of national unity in your mind. Try to vote for the good of the nation, and be versed on as many issues as you possibly can be. Remember, an intelligent voter always takes the high road, gets as much of the information as they can come from as many sources as they can, and tries to do all this with big picture thinking. Be that person.
11. As we move forward in our nation, it will be important for us to reduce the aggressive and angry thoughts as much as we can. Others that occupy the soil of this nation with us are not our enemies. We don't have to need the same opinions. Diversified thinking and the willingness to open our minds to two different ideals is what made us strong, and we need to return to that way of living. Incorporate this strategy, not only in your voting process, but on the way you live your life.

Politicians do make decisions, but we, as a unified people, can have a very strong influence on exactly how they do that. This part of the process is in our hands.

