

Getting Ready for Election Season

"Rabbit season!" "Duck season!" That old cartoon argument immediately comes to mind when I see people arguing about which candidate is best, who should run, etc. So much of what is said in politics boils down to arguments that really aren't much better than the one between Bugs and Daffy. Lots of noise, little care for facts.

Politics is often a dirty business. These days pretty much any politician is getting money from someone. Even companies claiming to offer nonpartisan information are often really geared toward making one side or the other look better. There is little care for reality.

Election season means hearing both sides even more so than usual calling each other liars. That's easy for them to do, as there are plenty of lies from each so far as I can tell. The cries of "traitor" are more annoying, since I do not believe either Republicans or Democrats really have any intention of making things easier for terrorists. They simply have different ideas as to what the solution is.

As things get moving, with more and more candidates declaring their intention to run for nomination, I hope more people think harder about what is really at stake. Yes, the war on terror is serious, and terrorism is a danger. We have been lucky here in the United States, and have suffered far less than most from it. Many other countries have suffered far more and far more often.

But that is not the only problem facing us. There are problems within this country. Education. Health care. Infrastructure. Environment. The list goes on.

As you look at the candidates for President and other political offices, you need to think about what you want them to do. Party affiliation can help you understand their beliefs, but it is not an absolute. Many candidates have beliefs that cross over party lines. Same for most voters.

As things gear up, don't rely solely on information from one side or the other. Read what the opposition has to say. Read what the middle has to say. And yes, read what your side has to say. You'll get very different stories.

Sometimes one side or the other will flat out lie. Politicians get caught doing that regularly.

Look at actual voting records. These are very telling. There's what a politician says he or she believes and what he or she really does. Very different sometimes, and very important to know.

Look at who is supporting the candidates. No matter how they may deny it, money does buy influence.

Consider third party candidates. Many will be too fringe in their beliefs for your taste. But sometimes a gem shines through.

Be an informed voter. There are more places to form your opinions than the evening news or even your favorite blog. Get as much information as you can from a range of sources so that you understand both sides. You'll be able to vote more intelligently for your efforts.

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