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Voting your conscience: when red or blue does not fit

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As young Americans, many of us do not have the ability or motivation to fully comprehend the political process of the constitutional federal republic that is the United States. We are apt to become members of one of the two principal parties - the GOP, otherwise known as the Republican Party, or the Democratic Party - without considering other options.

This stems from either a lack of knowledge on the existence of third parties or from an insistence on "keeping it in the family" and accepting the political platforms of what our parents, friends and churches believe to be God-given, inviolate truth. Yet, this should not be the case, and, in all actuality, this treatment of one's freedom to choose puts a damper on the voting souls who find their political solace outside of the two-party system.

PUT RON PAUL IN THE PRESS!



During this cycle of elections, history has been made and, as usual, feelings have been hurt. Personally, I have found that when expressing my opinion, I am abruptly met with a psychological wall of indifference because my views do not match up with a candidate who even has a chance. In essence, third-party voting is seen as a "waste," a misuse of freedom.

In response I must ask, since when has individual choice become so looked down upon? Is it now less about conscience of the individual and more about the good of the majority? Do I need to review the history of that type of political philosophy?

According to www.procon.org, there are six official nominees for the next President of the United States. In addition to the overly-publicized Obama and McCain, four legitimate, established parties remain: the Constitution Party, the Green Party, the Libertarian Party and the Reform Party. Each third, or independent, party has its own preamble and statement of principles, each holds its own national convention and the initial three have ballot access in the greater majority of the 50 states. Yet, at this point in time, independents do not have the opportunity to vote in primary elections throughout 18 states. The political parties of each state determine the necessity of independent voters during primaries or caucuses.

However, the Committee for a Unified Independent Party (CUIP) is attempting to enlighten the general public on the realistic advantages of voting independent and advocating that independents be included at every stage of the election process.

"Thirty-five percent of all Americans currently identify themselves as independents. Roughly 22 percent of the electorate are registered as such..." stated www.independentvoting.org, the official website of the CUIP. "What most independent voters mean by 'independent' is that they aren't party loyalists. Many believe partisanship has degraded our democracy and that the Democrats and Republicans have become 'special interests' unto themselves."

Before nominations were made and candidates accepted, Libertarian Ron Paul (who campaigned on the Republican ticket) was a favorite of conservative independents everywhere, especially at PBA. When he stepped down from campaigning with the GOP on June 12, 2008, Paul left his avid supporters, Republicans and Libertarians alike, lost.

Similarly, there has been a constant shift in party loyalty between McCain and Obama as favorites to win - spawned by media-driven intrusion into the candidates' personal lives and a strong desire to see change in an all-around way. Americans are becoming confused and hastily throwing themselves at the mercy of one of the mighty two.

In accordance with the notion of unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the Declaration of Independence stated that governments must be set in place in order to secure these rights. However, the power that controls these governments is contained within the people who established it.

"Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles...as to them shall seem most likely to [a]ffect their safety and happiness," said the document of American liberation. Fairly stated, it is our obligation to be advocates for change over a government that we, the people, do have control.

We do not settle. We do not live in a culture or country that accepts settling as an option. We choose the finest hospitals, food, education, leisure activities, tangible assets and credit-devouring liabilities that an individual salary can buy. To settle is to embrace mediocrity.

Why, then, would one settle on a leader?

Become informed, investigate the possibilities and do not be frightened into the arms of a candidate who does not fit your views simply because voting for him is heading down the path to a sure-fire victory. Independent parties represent individual choice; individual choice is the product of freedom, and freedom should be the reason why we love, live in and die for this country. Independents do not settle.

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