

God Life and Everything "None of the Above"

I believe it is every eligible citizen's duty, honor and privilege to vote. We can only be a real democracy if everyone takes it seriously and votes.

Yet every election cycle, the same argument arises: There's nobody worth voting for, so I'll just sit this one out!

Um, I hate to say it, but these are the candidates we get. If you want "better" candidates, then go get involved and encourage the ones you want. At the very least, vote for a third-party candidate as a protest. It's not a lost vote - it's a voice.

But I don't think the quality of the candidates is the problem. The system under which we all labor - voters and candidates alike - is simply not a very good system. Maybe it was before the information age erupted, but no longer.

The solution, however, is not to refuse to vote. The way forward is to change the system. Personally, I prefer a parliamentary system which encourages multiple parties, short election seasons, and a vote of no-confidence (which is not the same as impeachment).

I doubt we're going to get there any time soon - maybe in the next 100 years. If ever.

So I propose a modest alteration to our current system which would give voice even to those who don't like the offerings.

"None of the Above."

Now, to be clear, I don't intend this to be meaningless. I want it to have power. What that means is that if an election results in a plurality of the electorate voting for "None of the Above," then no candidate will be declared a winner, and a new vote - with all new candidates - must be held within a year. Until the new election, the old administration would remain in power. If you wanted to tweak it, you could require "None of the Above" to reach 50% before it kicks in, but you get the idea.

What I like about this idea is that people would literally have no excuse - zero - for not voting. Well, that assumes your state doesn't close your polling place or change voter registration guidelines or in some other way make voting increasingly difficult.

But, you say, this proposal has problems. What would happen if we really did vote for "None of the Above"? Wouldn't politicians manipulate the system?

I predict that some would try, but for the most part, candidates would work very hard to inspire the moderate middle - those who would most likely vote for "None of the Above". Because of this, the extremes would have a muted voice. And the parties would be much more careful about selecting their candidates.

If "None of the Above" actually did win, it would not be a disaster. The current administration would remain for another year, true, but the new election in just one year would limit their power; their lame-duck status would inhibit significant change. And while it is theoretically possible for "None of the Above" to win a second time in the follow-up election, I think it is highly unlikely. A safety valve for that could be that there is no "None of the Above" option for the second election.

In general, the more people vote, the better we are. And the more we are used to actually voting, the better informed we become. My proposal could help this happen. If someone else has a better, more effective way to encourage voting, I welcome it.

The main thing is, vote!