Using your Civility Tools to Choose Your Political Choices

For over a year now we have heard almost daily from individuals who wanted our vote to be president. While the slate seems near to be decided, we also have many other offices to consider when we go to the polls in November. Each of us can choose to be a civil voter by taking actions that will insure that we are making our best choices as a responsible citizen our city, county, state, and nation.

The League of Women Voters has some wonderful suggestions to help us to prepare. First we need to decide what we are looking for in a candidate which fall into two areas- their position on issues and leadership. Before we look at their stands on issues, we need to determine our own stands and it would probably help to write them down. Then we can listen to what they are saying or not saying about the issue. Next we have to identify what the qualities that we see as most important in a leader such as intelligence, honesty, experience, civility just to name a few.

Secondly, we need to find out about the candidates and gather materials. You become a researcher. While the news through newspapers, television, magazines, and, campaign materials can give you some information, you have to remember that there may be bias included by the writer or owner of the business. Certainly the internet can be a source of factual information, voting records, work experience, family, and education. Candidate often have an email or a website where you may ask questions. Again you may want to record some facts.

Now you to need to compare your thoughts on the issues that are not only important to you, but those that are important to your community, state, or country. Are the issues that concern you, the same as the candidates? On issues has there been clear declarations and what would be done to address the issue? What evidence do you see of inclusiveness? Review the party platforms of all the candidate’s as they address many of the current issues. Finally you can get the voting records if appropriate on the same or related issues. With all this information you can identify the issues to which there is agreement, some agreement, an openness to your view, very little agreement, or no agreement.

Leadership is often much harder to discern. Certainly many have been leaders in business or other political arenas where you can find opinions of their leadership. The action campaign and its operation can give you some clues. Also take a look at all the campaign materials and the speeches to see what is the emphasis- issues or image and how accurate? How is dissension handled on the campaign from both the audience and journalist? Can you give a credibility percentage?

Next you need to sort through the candidate’s campaign techniques. Each has been trying to get your vote. Some of those strategies may have used some form of distortion such as name calling, appeals to prejudice, rumor mongering, guilt by association, passing the blame, promising the sky, evading. None of these tactics deal with the issues and may illustrate aspects of leadership. Again record what you have learned.

Now you are ready to select your candidates by asking these final questions.

1. Which candidate’s views agree the most with mine?
2. Whose was the fairest campaign?
3. Who had the most knowledge on the issues?
4. Who had the qualities of leadership that I want in a leader?

We have a lot of work ahead of us before November. Candidates are doing their part by deciding to run for an office and then do the best job that they can. We can do our part by taking the time to be a responsible voter for ourselves and our country.

Good luck.

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