

OPINION

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. - The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Point and Counterpoint: To vote or not to vote

By Jerry Pohl and Logan Stack
calendar page editor & staff writer

Jerry: Election time has once again descended upon America like a cloud of locusts, devouring all substantive discourse and replacing it with talking points and blind fervor. To combat the menacing scourge that is representative democracy. I present this simple proposition: don't vote.

Logan: While talking points may substitute for an actual interview or useful questions for some people, thinking people can change our plight. I can see how our current representatives might be a scourge, but not the entire concept of a republic.

Jerry: Your opinion is, at best, laughable and, at worst, detrimental to the very concept of governance. Thinking people don't vote. I know I don't vote, and I think all the time; I think when I should be doing my homework. I think when I should be in class. I even think when I should be writing papers on philosophy. The statistics don't lie - unlike those shiftless statisticians - the demographic that votes in droves is senior citizens and retirees. The youth voter market is unreachable even by the most vapid and sexually gratuitous of advertising. The people have spoken - cause it's more effective than voting - voting is for old people.

Logan: Voting for someone who actually represents your interests isn't harmful to the concept of governance, just those who currently govern us. As a people, Americans are very effectively governed. In the last midterm election, less than half the populace voted. Our age group was a particularly shameful 17 percent. The prime AARP bracket of 65-75 had 63 percent turn out. Because AARP votes they get what they want: Medicare, Social Security, and firm handshakes from actual politicians visiting nursing homes - rather than the campaign representatives we got.

Jerry: You and your facts don't impress me, Stack. You can quote all the numbers you want, but 43 percent of people know that 62 percent of statistics are more than 81 percent inaccurate 94 percent of the time. The problems with our democracy cannot be fixed easily enough for us to even try. When America's not going the way you want you do the reasonable thing and go to Canada. When democracy's not going well you give up on it like any other moderately difficult problem. There are plenty of other forms of government where lack of participation is a good thing. Remember that it's the lazy people who don't vote that makes your opinion count, so show a little respect.

Logan: Those statistics are from census.gov - they have the ballots, they know how many people voted... at least in the states north of Florida. I admit that the problems our republic has are difficult to solve - and that moving to Canada is an easy way out. However, those of us staying here should vote. There is no system of government where participation by the educated is a bad thing. We're not going to get honest politicians. But if we vote, maybe we can get some who will actually represent us.

Jerry: Your ideas are spectacularly misinformed and you're a bad citizen for thinking them. Things would be even worse if politicians represented us. Currently they are out for their own interests and, by proxy, the interests of their financiers. If they started representing their constituents, people who are currently content to ~~harshly~~ complain and be productive little sheep would get the false hope that they can change things. If ~~you~~ noticed, society is responsible for all sorts of problems; people say so all the time. If the government were accountable to the public, we'd force them to make all kinds of bad decisions - like civil rights and logically consistent laws. How can we blame society and then trust its vote?

Logan: Wait, what? Civil rights and logically consistent laws would be a good thing. I hear they have them in some other countries. Finland had 73 percent voter turnout, with more than half of our age demographic voting; they have no tuition fees for college or troops in Iraq. We could have nice things if we told politi-



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cians they'd be out of office if they didn't represent us. Corporations can be sued if they don't do everything in their power to make more money. That doesn't encourage a conscience. They're not going to do what is right for society.

Jerry: Your understanding of politics is clearly gleaned from a syphilitic mental patient. Other countries are only doing so well because of the stability America provides. How does America provide that stability? By doing whatever is right regardless of other countries' leaders' or peoples' objections. Other countries don't vote on what America does, why should Americans? These other countries complain about America all the time and the liberal media eats it up with the silver spoons they've had in their mouths since birth. Maybe the complaints of American citizens would carry this much clout if we didn't waste our opinion voting. You can either vote, and have your opinion diluted with everyone else's, or you can reserve your judgment for when it's too late - hindsight is 20/20, though it could use some snazzy, rose-colored specs. If you don't vote, you preserve your right to complain about things that aren't partly your fault, because you didn't vote for them. If you vote, you have no right to complain.

Logan: Iraq was a stable country before we invaded, and was progressive for a Middle Eastern authoritarian state. Sometime you should count the number of South American states that were stable until we funded a reactionary, military coup d'état. The rest of the world has good reason to complain about us. Americans should vote on policy because other countries aren't willing to go to war with us to get us to do the right thing, and our government isn't afraid to burn bridges. You can still complain about politicians if you voted for them - they're known for backstabbing their constituents. The betrayal makes for a better story, so the media will cover you more than someone making general complaints. Jerry, people like you should have enough conviction in your ideals that you can ask for something of your representatives. Complaining about poor decisions while offering no opinion is not productive. It's cowardly because you ask others to risk their ego on an opinion that could be wrong, reserving the right to criticize while forwarding no ideas of your own.

Jerry: It's people like you, Logan, that keep democracy on life support with your voting, let it die with... I'm sure there's some dignity in a back room somewhere. By not voting I'm voting against the system. Every vote that isn't cast is one more person saying, "No democracy for me," and we make up the majority. If you really believed in democracy you'd support the will of the people and end this electoral charade.

Logan: Jerry... you're right. Half this country doesn't want democracy - they've voted for it by not voting. I guess that means they won't mind being ruled by the other half. The voting half consists of a small number of interested citizens, America's diminutive intelligentsia, the AARP, and the religious extremists voting to amend against gay marriage/abortion/evolution in schools. That last group concerns me because they'll elect anyone that supports their religious views, not caring a whit about their other views - like invading sovereign nations or giving even more money to the upper 1 percent with tax cuts and pro-business legislation.

Jerry: Logan... you're wrong! But, since I agree with everything you just said, I must be wrong too; which means we're both wrong and this has all been pointless.... Just like voting! Ha! I win!

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Submission Guidelines

The Beacon welcomes readers to share their views on this page. Letters and commentary pieces can be submitted by email to klk5005@psu.edu or directly to the Beacon office, located in the Reed Building.

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries should be limited to 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run the submission.

All submissions must include the writer's year in school, major and name as The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue. All submissions are considered, but because of space limitations, some may not be published.

The Behrend Beacon reserves the right to edit any submissions prior to publication.

Dear Editor,

I'd like to thank Jessica Tyndall for stating that I should not judge others. I was wrong to make the judgment that all Behrend students who read the Humor Page of the Beacon understand the statement "Disclaimer: All articles are for entertainment purposes only," which is printed at the bottom of the page each week. Apparently, all Behrend students do not understand this disclaimer. Perhaps a disclaimer such as "People who can't take a joke should avoid this page" or "If your talent for detecting sarcasm in printed material is craptastic, skip this page" would rectify the situation.

In lieu of this, I also need to stop assuming that when readers of the Beacon write letters to the Editor they know that two important things to include in said letters are the correct title and quotes from the article. I guess some people were absent from class the day a lesson called "correct information helps others take an argument seriously" was taught.

I will make a conscious effort to acknowledge that my sarcastic judgments and assumptions, such as the ones stated above, can be wrong. However, you'll have to excuse me because that effort won't make it to my Humor Page articles.

Smooches,
Liz Cybulski (aka "The person who wrote" Random Rants and Ramblings on the HUMOR PAGE)

Beacon Thumbs Up



- Snow
- Flavored chapstick
- Scarves and mittens
- New vendors for LionCash

Beacon Thumbs Down



- Snow
- Super furry boots
- Winter roads
- Bad drivers



Have a Thumbs Up or
Thumbs Down?



Submit it to the "Thumbs up-Thumbs Down" box at the RUB desk.