

Community Comment
September 24, 2015
Sam Pennisi

The election season

Look around. The local sign war has begun. Candidates have started placing signs in various places around Humboldt to get the word out that they are seeking an opportunity to hold elective office. While there are exceptions I'm sure, most people who throw their hat into the ring have an idea of the responsibility these positions entail. Governing is hard work. It requires a lot of reading, critical analysis, reflection on the complexity of choices, and the use of diplomacy and persuasion to get the votes required to pass an ordinance or policy statement. At the core of these positions there must be the desire to serve their constituents, all of them. Even those who did not vote for you demand your attention and respect. In politics, compromise is not a bad thing; it is how we get along and get things done. Kudos to all who seek this responsibility. Our government works because private citizens decide to give some of their time and talent to the community.

Local political office also provides a great training opportunity for some who might be interested in larger political arenas. In our system, party politics plays a major role once one enters statewide positions. Many of us don't like this fact but without party groupings, we would never get anything done. But party is not the evil force at work here; money is. Money stops many from running in the first place. Raising money stops many more. Taking money and staying independent and answerable only to your constituency stops some more. Even local races are demanding more and more money to be competitive. And we still have to do the work that the office demands of us. Winners of these races will take an oath to uphold and defend the constitution of the United States and their State. There are legal obligations that the office holder must understand and uphold. These are the rules of the system. Some say these are the rules of the game; but it is not a game. Local, state, and national representatives make decisions that affect our pocketbooks and our very lives. Some decisions will impact our grandchildren and beyond. We, the voters, must do our job of voting with serious thought and dedication.

We have had two opportunities to see the national republican candidates for the office of President. Fox news and CNN news each staged a debate. Except it wasn't a debate at all. Both were question and answer sessions with few policy questions being asked. When a serious question was asked, there was no way so many candidates could debate how an idea might actually be implemented. These two events were a disservice to all voters because we learned so little about real issues and solutions. Even war, perhaps the most serious activity a government could use was casually thrown around. For goodness sake, when we talk of war, we are talking about loss of human life, great commitments of resources, and the risk of longterm damage to cultures and environments.

In order for us to do our job as citizens and voters. We have to expect and demand better of our candidates and our news media to take this seriously. We are off to a poor start. I hope it gets better.

~~This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.~~