

Why I Didn't Vote

The first Tuesday after the first Monday every November is Election Day in the United States. Every election season, many organizations attempt to rally voters to the polls. The "Go vote!" message is everywhere these days. As a principled non-voter, I find it incredibly annoying, but such is life under statism.

People are aghast when they learn that I do not participate in electoral politics and voting. I have a lot to say about political philosophy, for sure, but it does not follow that I should be politically active. I have only ever voted twice since my 18th birthday, the first was during the Bush-Kerry election, in which I voted, quite ignorantly, for John Kerry. The second was during the Obama-McCain election, and I wrote myself in for President. It was a joke, because it is a joke.

How does one become a principled non-voter? It was an evolution that occurred alongside my journey toward voluntarism. I know plenty of libertarians and voluntaryists that still vote, however, so I don't believe it's inevitable that this journey will result as it has for me. So here it is, the step-by-step guide to explain exactly why I didn't vote this November.

Campaign Promises

My first realization was that campaign promises made by candidates are incredibly difficult to keep. What's the point in allowing a promise to persuade you toward supporting a candidate if it's obvious that they are either lying to get votes, or promising what is not theirs to promise. The most a candidate can effectively promise is to not do something, such as voting to raise the level of coercion leveled at society by government. And how many popular candidates are doing that?

Tax Burdens

My second realization was that I have no right as an individual to push for the implementation of a tax increase on my neighbors. Very few Propositions on the ballot are to decrease taxes, but what about voting against tax increases? A defensive measure, to be sure, but keep reading.

Increasing Coercion

My third realization was that I have no right as an individual to push for an increase in the amount of coercion leveled at society by governments. Most Propositions necessarily have this effect, not only those that are concerned with tax levels. Again, voting against? Defensive, but keep reading.

Statistical Value

My fourth realization was that my individual vote is statistically worthless. It is an incredibly rare event for a candidate or issue to be decided on the basis of 1 vote. Probabilities tell us that virtually all elections are decided by no fewer than a few hundred votes. Statistical value is lessened even more when you consider the margin of error and the possibility of voter fraud. Every morning after Election Day I wake up and perform a little thought experiment while viewing the election results: I ask myself, would my vote have changed the outcome in any of these elections? To date, the answer has been a decided NO.

Rational Irrationality

My fifth realization was that, after considering the statistical worthlessness of my vote, spending any amount of time on researching the candidates and issues was irrational. How many people spend more time researching elections than researching buying a house? Arguably, the election is far more important, and the knowledge required to make an informed decision is far more vast, than for buying a house. Yet, our vote does not get us what we want in the same way that buying a house does. The house is certain, the vote is not. As economist Bryan Caplan wrote, it is rational to be ignorant when voting, and irrational to be informed. Therefore, most voters are ignorant on the issues, and their vote is worth as much as mine.

Quiet Dissent

My sixth realization was that elections are a very effective way to give people the feeling that they've had their say. As long as people feel like they have some effect in the process, that their "voice" has been heard, they are more likely to shut up about their dissent toward government and its policies. I find the idea of voting as voice to be ridiculous on the bases described above, but also, there are far better alternatives to being heard than voting. I've been writing and discussing for ten years and podcasting for five, and in all that time I have affected more people to change their thinking, their lives, and their parenting for the better than I ever did in the election booth. Elections are meant to quiet dissent, and I will not allow my dissent to be silenced.

Criminal Gang

My seventh realization, one that was evolving along the way, was that governments are just better organized criminal gangs. Sure, some election issues to increase coercion can be stopped, and some candidates promise to protect your liberties, but every election to date has had the result of increasing the size and scope of government overall. Libertarian-minded candidates and liberty-protecting issues are simply not popular, and probably never will be. Criminal gangs attract the criminal minded. Elections are *allowed* by government, and are unlikely to affect their existence in any positive direction. Plus, as

George Carlin put it, governments were bought and paid for a long time ago. My vote won't change that.

Culture and Technology

My eighth realization came when considering the effects that culture and technology have toward the actions that people who call themselves "government" take. Governments don't make progress in front of culture. Quite the opposite. Culture changes first, and forces government policy to follow. So what's the point in participating in elections if the candidates and issues are several steps behind culture? Consider also the effect that technology has on forcing governments to change the way they do things, or become obsolete. The very real forces of culture and technology toward combating governments are effective and occur without any regard to elections.

So there you have it: why I didn't vote on Election Day, and why I never will.