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Don't let the party fads dictate your vote

2010-10-21

By [Trey Alverson](#)

It's the parties that win the popularity contests, not the candidates. When the economy slips or the national mood shifts, the once popular party and its formerly sterling cast of saviors tarnish into pariahs. Then, the national political cycle resets and the other party wins another try through the ballot box.

Our best leaders shift with the trends -- clinging to the parties wherein they feel they can make a difference and truly affect policy. After all, it's policy, not party, that matters most once the ballots have been counted.

In 1948, the Democratic and Republican parties heavily recruited WWII war hero Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to lead their presidential tickets. Both parties recognized him as a once-in-a-lifetime transcendent leader, under whose direction much-desired policy changes might come to fruition.

Ike sat out the 1948 election. Eisenhower held firm beliefs about how America would best prosper, but returning from war, he needed time to analyze which party provided him with the best opportunity to enact his vision. In 1952, Eisenhower turned to the Republican party, recognizing that the easiest path to the presidency -- the then dominant Democratic party -- was too rife with corruption and obstructionists to realize his goals.

During the Jim Crow era, Ike declared institutionalized racial discrimination "a national security issue," recognizing that America's single greatest flaw doubled as the communists' most potent propaganda tool of the Cold War. Today, historians consistently rank Eisenhower among the 10 greatest American presidents.

Unfortunately, poor leaders and corrupt politicians also ride the tide of the American party popularity shifts. For those of us with short memories, Barack Obama is example No. 1.

Nathan Deal, the once pro-choice Democratic Congressman who ran against Newt Gingrich's Contract for America in 1994, is example No. 2.

Deal, a conservative of convenience, switched parties in the mid 1990's and is now the Republican nominee for governor.

Deal's opponent, Roy Barnes, is no Ike. He never will be. However, Barnes has proven that he believes in directing policy that benefits all Georgians -- not just himself and his friends.

In 2002, Barnes lost his bid for re-election for governor of this state mostly because he stood up for what he believed was right. His terrible crime in the minds of many voters was his decision to change the state flag. Barnes knew that with the square Confederate flag dominating our state banner, Georgia stood to lose millions in investment and development. Barnes also knew that what was then popular with the voters conflicted with what he recognized as right. Unlike many politicians, Barnes chose the latter. He changed the flag.

Barnes' opponent this cycle has proven through reluctant disclosures, repeated excuses and scandal after scandal that his own financial interest ranks far ahead of the future of Georgia on his personal priority list.

I know we live in a Republican state and this is a Republican year, but I encourage voters to step away from the national fad for a moment and elect the best leader at the top of this November's ballot.

Deal, the corrupt party-switching insider, is not the answer to any of the problems we currently face. Deal's laundry list of ethical lapses makes him unfit to run for office, let alone govern.

Those who worry about a conservative Democrat taking control of the governor's office can sleep easy knowing that conservative Republicans will still control the Georgia General Assembly no matter who is elected to move into the mansion on West Paces Ferry.

Despite what Deal wants you to believe, Barnes has very little in common with Obama or Pelosi. In 2002, the conservative CATO Institute ranked Barnes third among all 50 governors in overall fiscal policy. Barnes finished one place behind Jeb Bush and 17 spots ahead of Mike Huckabee.

As far as congressional elections go, let's ride the national tide. By all means, let's send the national Democrats a clear message and express our dissatisfaction a the polls.

But do remember, it's policy, ethics and integrity that matters most once the polls have closed.

And that is why I am voting for Roy Barnes for Governor of Georgia in 2010.

Alverson, a graduate of Fayette County High School and the U.S. Naval Academy, is the editor of this newspaper.

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