



The fickle American voter

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Do you know what "fickle" means? I recently set down my tiny glass of magic elixir and sought a dictionary to increase my vocabulary.

Fickle is an adjective that means "changing frequently, especially as regards one's loyalties, interests or affection."

That's a perfect definition, I think, to describe the behavior of the American voter.

I remember a humorous situation one day in my own living room.

A visiting health nurse had come to tend to me during my recuperation from knee replacement surgery. She was most professional.

As part of her visit, she gave me a mental quiz to test my acuity. It was a necessary part of her job, she said. She asked me what day it was, the year and a few other questions.

I answered.

I then said to her, "Now, before I let you examine my knee, you must answer one question for me."

"What is the question?" she asked.

I had but one inquiry. "Who is the vice president of the United States?"

She sat there puzzled and began to laugh. She offered no answer.

"You don't know, do you?" I said.

She didn't. We both laughed out loud, and I offered, "I'm not sure I should let you work on my knee."

By the way, the vice president on this day was Mike Pence.

The American voter is really not well informed at times.

I suspect voters cast their ballots for many different reasons.

One who has a student loan most likely will vote for the candidate who is all in for forgiving student loans.

Social Security recipients are most likely to vote for the candidate who is all about saving their monthly incomes.

Pacifists will look for the candidate to keep us out of unnecessary wars.

Folk who can't or won't work would like to see more government benefits and big spender types.

People concerned about deficits, depressions and inflation might tend to look for a candidate who can add and subtract to eliminate the debt.

The American voter can be fairly naive and act in a fickle manner at the end of the day.

Do you believe voters do their necessary homework to elect the very best person to run the country and fix our many problems? Or do they merely strive to select the person who supports their own priorities, regardless?

Ilya Somin, who provided some insight in his "Democracy and Political Ignorance: Why Smaller Government Is Smarter," is a member of the Cato Institute. He presented an interesting thesis of politics:

Some say only about 34% of Americans can name the three major branches of government and most don't know what they do. Thirty-eight percent couldn't tell you what party controls the House and Senate.

Do voters always elect the most physically fit, the most intellectually astute or the most effective candidate; or the one who tells the best stories, entertains and promises things beyond one's comprehension or imagination?

Do our candidates always leave a lasting impression on us so we might remember their names?

George Washington feared the creation of political parties and the disunion they could create in the country if they kept fighting each other.

Somin might agree.

And once elected, are the names of officials soon forgotten because the voter can't remember anything they did?

Somin suggests that “the evidence is overwhelming that the amount of political ignorance out there is pretty severe.”

Does the American voter really understand how trade works between other countries and ours?

Somin proffers that the operation of government today is so complex that the average voter knows little about how it works.

Somin also suggests that voters do more research on buying TVs and cars than they do in selecting political candidates.

He reminds us that “Plato argued that voters don’t know what they’re doing, so we should replace democracy with rule by some sort of informed elite.”

So what’s around the corner for us?

More of the same most likely.

By the way, can you tell me who the vice president of the United States is today?

I thought so!