



Separating Campaign Rhetoric From Voting Record

We've all heard the quip that we know a politician is lying when his lips are moving. Well, that begs the question, how do you know when he's honest? And more importantly, does he carry that over into his voting habits?

We'll look into this today and offer some tools you can use to keep your current elected officials accountable to voters.

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Bill Hahn

As the U.S. heads into election season, most Americans will become inundated with campaign rhetoric. And you can bet that the rhetoric never goes too deep, but says all the pleasantries that their political base can rally around.

Yet, what's the job of an elected official? To make everyone happy? To take charge of issues that voters and donors care about? Well, let's put it this way: When you have been job-seeking, the want ad assembled by the employer usually lists required skills and a detailed job description. It's that description that offers a glimpse into what a prospective employee will be doing, and what is expected from him.

If these are not followed, then he is making the case for his own unemployment. Likewise, if elected officials are not doing their job, then they too can find themselves unelected.

Let's play out an example to give further insight. Founding Father John Adams once wrote, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Why is that? In practice, those that are moral and religious have submitted to following the guidelines of a higher authority. Those that are Jewish and Christian submit to God as the authority and follow His 10 Commandments. Christians further submit to Christ's summation of the law as loving God with all your might and loving your neighbor as yourself.

They make up about 71 percent of the population in America, according to a [2020 poll](#) conducted by PRRI.

Those that do submit to a higher authority expect to conduct themselves accordingly and treat others as they want to be treated. They are practicing the spirit of the law by following moral principles. Thus, they have less need for laws to govern them, as they are out to help their neighbor, and not to harm him.

John Adams points out that the Constitution was made for this type of people. The Constitution was not



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meant to be one of micromanagement. Rather, it was to provide the blueprint for a representative government that was big enough to protect the people's rights, but small enough to allow for the free exercise of those God-given rights.

The Constitution is a set of guidelines that those elected to office are to follow. It limits the government, and not the people. To a certain extent, it's part of an elected official's job description and helps determine just how successful they are as an elected official. So how are your elected officials doing? How do you determine this? Is it based on how they look, what they say, how they're polling, what the media or your neighbor says about them, or a host of other factors?

The truth is we should be measuring their success based on their adherence to the job description. Yet, this is not self-policing. The employee does not get to tell the employer how well he is doing. The employer determines this according to the successful adherence to the job description. Thus, voters should be holding their elected officials accountable.

James Madison, who was known as the Father of the Constitution, predicted dire consequences if Congress would not follow its limitations as seen in the Constitution. [He wrote](#), "If Congress can employ money indefinitely, for the general welfare, and are the sole and supreme judges of the general welfare, they may take the care of religion into their own hands; they may appoint teachers in every state, county, and parish, and pay them out of the public treasury; they may take into their own hands the education of children, the establishing in like manner schools throughout the union; they may assume the provision of the poor.... Were the power of Congress to be established in the latitude contended for, it would subvert the very foundations, and transmute the very nature of the limited government established by the people of America."

Isn't that where we are today? To fix this, we must first understand how well elected officials adhere to the Constitution. What better way than to follow their votes?

The New American and The John Birch Society provide a highly valuable resource to help determine this very thing. Called the Freedom Index, it "rates members of Congress based on their adherence to constitutional principles of limited government, fiscal responsibility, national sovereignty, and a traditional foreign policy of avoiding foreign entanglements."

As the latest Freedom Index installment states, "The scores are derived by dividing a congressman's constitutional votes (pluses) by the total number he cast (pluses and minuses) and multiplying by 100."

The Freedom Index is assembled twice a year for Congress. So how well do you think Congress did? Well, let's just say that it reflects the current state of the Union.

The latest index shows that the average House score is a mere 39 percent, while the Senate scored an average 40 percent. I don't know about you, but when I was in school, these weren't passing grades.

When we break this down by political party, House Republicans scored 68 percent, while House Democrats scored eight percent. And it was similar in the Senate with Republicans scoring 71 percent and Democrats scoring eight percent.

Now, let's not cheer too loudly for Republicans. During a Democratic presidential administration, it's easier to score higher by merely being opposed to the other side. Republicans scores usually drop when they hold the presidency.

And 68 and 71 percent scores are barely passing grades.

If you think this sounds bad, then let me bring it a little closer to home. How well do you think you



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would do if you were in Congress? Would you know what is constitutional and what isn't?

Before you answer, let me tell you that the Freedom Index not only rates constitutional adherence, it also explains why. Every installment of the Freedom Index is based on 10 key votes. Congressmen are not told what votes will be rated either, unlike other organizations that do give these elected officials advanced warning.

The Freedom Index describes each vote and then explains why the vote is constitutional or not. We've been told that each installment of the Freedom Index is like having 10 mini lessons on the Constitution. Study these enough, and you'll begin to rate these votes for yourself, coming to see them as justified by the Constitution or not.

You'll also begin to separate campaign rhetoric from actual record, as well as pick up on trends. For instance, you might expect such Democrats as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, John Fetterman, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib to score poorly. All scored at 20 percent. But you might not know that Republicans Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins scored only a couple votes higher at 40 percent.

GOP leadership did not fare overly well either, with Kevin McCarthy and Mitch McConnell both scoring a failing 50 percent.

And here's what's really exciting about this powerful tool: Not only do we have these for every member of Congress, but we also have this for every state legislator. And these are free for downloading. Then merely print these at home or have them locally printed for larger distributions.

Since knowing is half the battle, get to know the Freedom Index and the Congressional Scorecards and the State Legislative Scorecards. These can be downloaded as free PDFs at TheFreedomIndex.org.

And if knowing is half the battle, the rest of the battle is actually using these tools. You must utilize action to generate pressure from the voters onto elected officials to hold them accountable.

Members of [The John Birch Society](#) do this through local Chapter activity. They coordinate literature distribution drops through various activities, including targeted neighborhood door-to-door distribution with the use of door hanger bags, passing along the Index and scorecards at community events, including parades, and hosting a table at gun shows, county and state fairs, and local markets. They also host speaking events and video showings where these can be handed out too.

And for maximum effect, ad hoc committees can be organized that pull together both JBS members and likeminded non-members. Your local JBS coordinator can help guide you. But the important point is to be active and to make the local electorate aware of their elected official's voting record. Then be sure to let your elected officials know you and many others are sharing these records with constituents. Thank them for their adherence where it's present and help them understand how they can improve. Again, each index and scorecard explains each vote and its constitutional adherence.

In so doing, you will be following the advice of Thomas Jefferson, who wrote, "I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

Be part of the lasting remedy through education by working with others in your local community. [Join](#) The John Birch Society today!

I'm Bill Hahn for The John Birch Society, and until next time, learn more, take action, and get involved, patriots!



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