



The Fallacy of Encouraging Voting

We hear it every election campaign. We are told that it is our duty to get out and vote. Election officials routinely tell the media that they are hoping for a huge turnout. Local TV anchors all across the country tell viewers inane things such as, “Go vote, no matter how you are going to vote,” as though increasing the vote totals will lead to a better country, state, and local community.

In many locales, voters are given a little sticker reading “I voted,” as though the person had stormed the beaches of Normandy.



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This election, we hear that even college athletes are being urged — practically compelled — to register and vote. If the coach is telling his team to register and vote, is that not rather intimidating to for an athlete who wants more playing time?

The truth is that if someone casts an uninformed vote, that person is cancelling out the vote of the person who took the time to carefully examine the candidates and the issues before casting his own vote. We do not let six-year-olds drive on the city streets because they are much more likely to do great damage than someone who is, say, 16. Even then, a 16-year-old is about four times more likely to cause an automobile accident than someone who is, say, 19. So why should we urge a person who is ignorant of both the candidates and the issues to inflict harm on society?

If the crowd that is encouraging increased voting believes voting is so important, one must ask, “Why is voting important?” First of all, how someone votes is important. The ballot box is how the personnel of government is chosen, and the policies of government are determined in a civil manner. Those personnel and their policies can affect the lives of literally millions of people.

Let’s take for comparison the example of the people who are selected to be on the College Football Playoff committee. Sports fans argue whether this or that person should even be on the committee, usually contending that this or that person simply does not know enough about the sport of college football to make an informed judgment. Yet, some of those same folks who would keep an uninformed person off the College Football Playoff committee would join in on the public efforts to get more people to go vote.

Yet, isn’t voting for public officials who will make policies that can affect our lives much more important than who is on the College Football Playoff committee? After all, members of the College Football Playoff committee cannot send soldiers to war or raise our taxes or, on the local level, file criminal charges against us.

Telling someone to go vote even if that person has not even bothered to take the time to examine the candidates is like telling someone to be a juror in a court case and vote guilty or not guilty without bothering to listen to the evidence.

Part of the problem, perhaps the major part of the problem, is that there is a fundamental



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on September 28, 2020

misunderstanding as to why we even have government. Government exists to protect rights that God has given us, among these, as Thomas Jefferson put it in the Declaration of Independence, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Jefferson wrote, “That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among me, deriving their *just* powers from the consent of the governed.” (Emphasis added.)

Note that Jefferson said that government obtains its *just powers* from the consent of the governed. In other words, government is limited to exercising just powers, which are powers to protect the rights that God has given us. A legitimate government is one that has the approval of those being governed, and one that exercises those powers to protect our rights.

American governments are not established to make sure the will of the majority prevails, even if individual rights are ignored or cast aside. Much of the time, the push for voting is tied to the idea that the United States government was created as a democracy, rather than as a republic. Democratic activities such as voting are not an end in themselves, but are the method we use to select those who will hold the reins of government power.

Pure democracy would be mob rule. Majorities should not be able to take away our God-given natural rights. Unchecked democracy is sort of like two wolves and a lamb deciding what’s for supper.

Preferable to urging citizens to vote is urging them to become educated as to the proper role of government, the value of liberty, limited government, the free market, and electing men and women of good moral character to public office. Urging someone to mindlessly vote, even if that someone is abysmally ignorant of anything a candidate stands for, whether that person is qualified for the office, and what are the pros and cons of the various issues, is absurd.

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