

# VIEWPOINTS

## The Best Way... Not to be a Politician

By Alan Dale  
The Plain Talk

Ah it's that time of year. The leaves are turning color, birds are flying south for the winter, and sports are in full bloom. Take a nice deep breath. Breathe in that air... and gag. Why? Because this is also unfortunately the time of year we get a whiff of a lot of broken promises and rhetoric that is almost as empty as an oyster on the half shell in Massachusetts.

Another election has come and passed and without any doubt most of us will be left disappointed shortly after casting our votes for those who promised us the moon and will probably end up just delivering some rotten Gouda.

Do I sound like a negative Nancy? No. I sound like the truth. Especially when it comes to politics and especially when we discuss anything above the grassroots level. Even then it can be hit or miss at times.

The truth speaks volumes when one of the most important rights a citizen should hold on tight to is the one to vote.

Yet, no one in this country does. Well, at least not many of us.

According to a USA Today study, 14.8 percent of eligible U.S. voters cast ballots in the first 25 statewide primaries this year.

How completely unimpressive. Many like to rail on about the lack of education our voting populace has. Is there truth to that? Yes, of course because we are getting a lot less smart every day.

But, we all know a true Alpha when we see one and when politicians pose as leaders a society ends up lacking leadership.

Sadly, it doesn't matter if it's a donkey or an elephant, red or blue, or this party or that one, the fact is the political system as we know it has failed.

Why? Because too many people in positions of power don't belong where they sit.

We have lost leadership in America. We have two parties waging finger-wagging wars at one another while distracting us from the real issues at hand.

Yes, let's see Congress get involved in steroid investigations or waste our and their time on the completely unnecessary waste of resources arguing the merits of (you fill in the blank, too many to list here...). An then let me know when they actually do something that will help you make living, pay bills, and even take a walk to the mailbox before you start prattling on about such lame "importance."

But, yet, while they drivel on with these things do we see a Republican or a Democrat standing in front of the House or Senate and calling out a corrupt and morally bankrupt hierarchy?

I don't, do you? Wouldn't you love to hear a politician have the guts - or the true leadership skills - to say these things:

"I find it deplorable how our health insurance companies put 99 percent of our people in a die or go homeless situation!

This has to stop!" "I find it despicable that pharmaceuticals are charging an X-amount too much more for medicines that could save a life from misery! This has to stop!"

"I find it criminal how hospitals will charge a person \$30,000 for a three-day stay! This has to stop!"

"I find it flabbergasting to see how petrol companies say the reasons they do to raise gas prices but still turn eight and nine-figure profits! This has to stop!"

"I find it questionable in character for utility companies to charge as much as they do for electricity - which is a weight-less entity - and force people to freeze or not eat because they pay \$300 bills just to be warm! This has to stop!"

You probably get the picture. Point is, we do NOT see our alleged leaders (faux) fighting for US, the people who voted them in. They fight for their agendas, they fight for what will line their party pockets with promises of future winnings.

While 99 percent of us go hungry, freeze, or die in the streets as a healthy survivor of cancer, they are winning the class war. They distract with party politics when the issue here is class vs. class. No more, no less.

Ladies and gentlemen I do hope that our newly elected servants to the people do right and live tall.

I hope they speak the truth and not speak to pacify.

Great leaders don't care about being liked...they care about leading and making those unpopular decisions that may come back later if not soon enough for re-election.

Too bad...do the right thing. The best way to find a strong government?

Abolish the current system and create a new one where elected officials come from the masses.

Make it a requirement that a person who runs for a post has to have lived at least 75 percent of his/her life living in the bottom 1/4 income tax bracket. Make them prove that there are indeed one of us and not some rich kid who just had enough money to run for an office they should have never sniffed.

Force those who have lived above the average means to petition the people for the simple right to run. Have them ask us for permission to represent people they have no idea about. How can someone who used sterling silverware know what it's like to use a pork?

Are there people of means that could be great leaders? Well, of course, But there are way more that can't and those are the ones that need to be screened out of consideration.

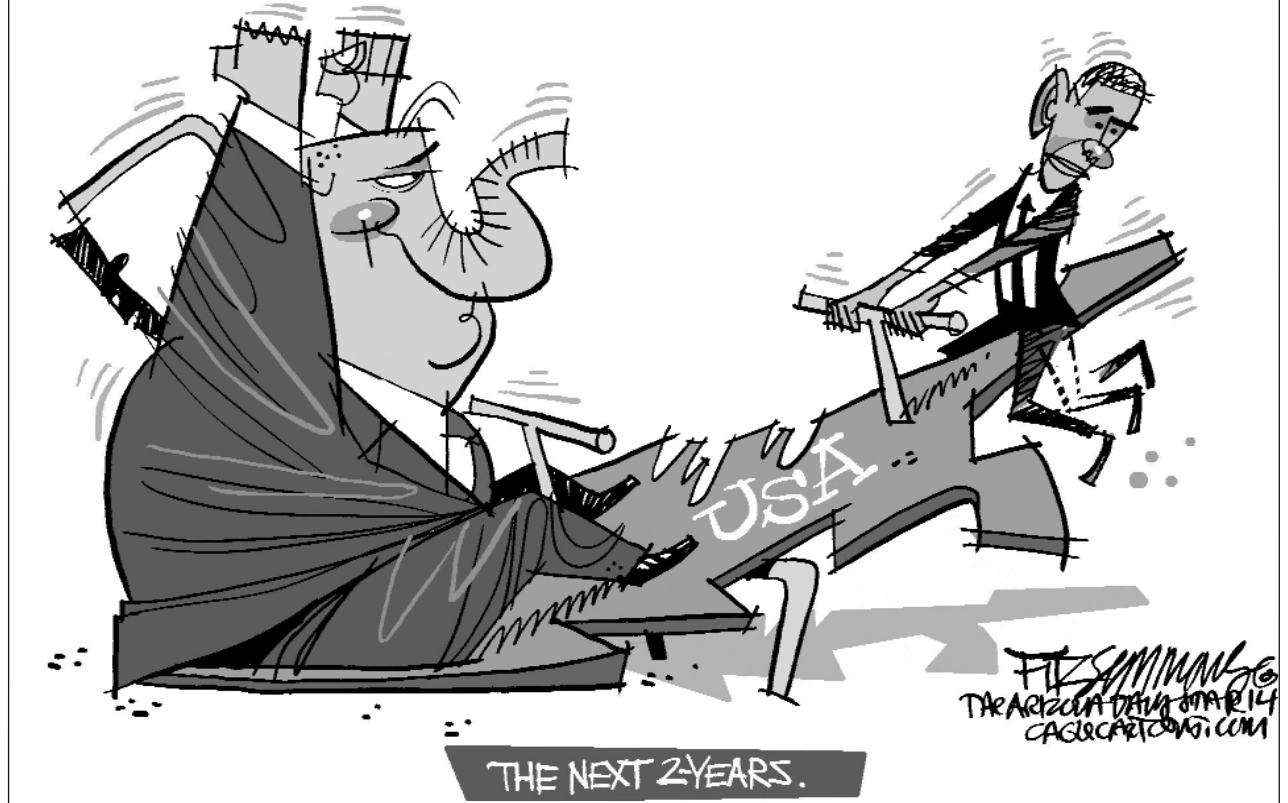
They need to prove to us that they are worthy and not the other way around.

See...leaders lead those who look up to them to do so. They do it at a cost to themselves and go down with the ship.

Sadly, we are run by politicians always hoping to better their own permanently flawed images and they are the ones poking the hole in the bottom of the boat.

At this rate, we are the ones drowning looking for the rafts to survive.

Too bad they will overcharge us for those as well.



## If I Wake Before I Die ...

By Paula Damon

If I wake before I die... "I don't want to achieve immortality through my work; I want to achieve immortality through not dying." - Woody Allen, comedian

After reading the story about a man who had been declared dead was found alive in a Brazilian morgue, I totally freaked out!

Could that happen to me? Then I heard about an Ohio guy who came back to life 45 minutes after being pronounced dead.

Trust me; if I were not really dead, waking up in a morgue or funeral home would probably kill me.

While most people dream about all the wonderful things that will be said about them in their eulogies, like best teacher, outstanding coach, loving mother and wife, great doctor, all I want them to say about me is "Look, she's moving!"

Since learning that the dead can come back to life, I've been trying to figure out how I'd make my way out of a sealed body bag or casket.

I could ask my kids to charge a cordless jigsaw and put it within reach so I can easily grab it and cut my way out.

Or one of those stadium horns fans use at sporting events, so at least I can make enough noise to get somebody's attention.

I thought about asking my family to put a large referee's whistle in my mouth, so when I come to, they'd know I was alive, like Rose in the Titanic.

How about a camera, like bird

cams at nature centers or deer cameras for hunting?

Better yet, a baby monitor, so I could broadcast my S.O.S. to the outside world.

"HELP!" This whole idea that I could be alive when everyone thinks I'm dead is making me a nervous wreck.

I've just got to figure it out! I guess I could ask my pallbearers in advance to be a little reckless when carrying my coffin.

Bump into things. Drop me for all I care - anything to get me going again.

My pastor could help out. I'll ask her to hold my hand and give it a good hard squeeze when she's telling the Biblical story of Lazarus at my wake. Hey, if I squeeze back, it's a surefire sign I haven't kicked the bucket yet.

Through all of this, I've been pondering the pros and cons of coming back to life.

On the one hand, I'd have a new lease on life, although possibly very short, like that guy who woke up in the morgue, only to die an hour later.

On the other hand, if I did live, I'd have to put up with two more years of TV political ads. I suppose that's why God made mute buttons, Home and Garden Network and the Weather Channel.

Death really can't be all that bad, can it? It is the one thing we can count on - that and taxes or so they say.

Oh, what to do? Fretting over the notion of being pronounced dead but not really being

dead, I made the mistake of consulting my husband.

"There's no way you could be alive after the funeral home is done with you," he reminded, "since they would have already drained your blood and replaced it with embalming fluid."

Goodness sakes alive, did I really need that much information?

"Oh," I replied begrudgingly, wishing I hadn't asked.

"Besides," he tried to assure, "you want to be cremated. So, why worry? You'll be a pile of ashes, left in the dust before you know what's hit you."

Oh, thanks a lot. Some comfort that is.

My husband has the bedside manner of a toadstool.

This is going nowhere fast. Just five minutes ago all I had to worry about was waking up in the morgue. Now, I have to think about coming alive in the crematorium!

On the plus side, the crematorium back home is really handy - right behind Burger King, so my husband could get a Whopper while I fry.

That's me - always thinking of him first.

"Why in the world did you have to add that?" I lamented. "Make a mental note, dear. There are some things best left unsaid, and that's one of them."

Since I wasn't getting any empathy, I kept troubleshooting.

I've got it - I'll have a notice printed in my funeral service bulletin, "If my casket's a rockin, please, oh, please come knockin'."

## Three Ways To Fix A Broken Political System

By Alan L. Neville  
Aberdeen

Thank goodness the Nov. 4 elections are behind us.

It seems the older I get, the more cynical I become.

I wasn't always this way. I used to believe that the political process worked.

Now, I am more inclined to agree with Frank Zappa, that "politics is the entertainment branch of industry." By nearly all accounts, the political process is broken, so here are my suggestions on how to "fix" this folly:

- Establish term limits. Legislative service was never intended to be a career. It was intended to be public service by participation in one's own governance. But politicians today spend more time raising money for their next election than they do trying to solve real problems and with real solutions. Without a fixed amount of time to get

something done, inaction and partisanship have become the norm. We even joke about Congress's utter inaction, which occurs largely because there is more politician loyalty to the two dysfunctional and monopolistic parties than to the people who elected them.

Term limits would enable lawmakers to focus on the tasks at hand without concerns of where they might be in 10 years. Terms should be limited to four years.

- Reform campaign financing. Whenever politicians are beholden to large donors, or even large parties, they are not acting in the best interests of their constituents. They toe the party line or they do not receive the support (financial or otherwise) to get re-elected. Thus, we have all the grandstanding in Washington. We should strictly limit the amount of money that individuals and/or corporations can

donate to a campaign. Or, better yet, combine all donations into a pool to be split evenly amongst the candidates - not the parties.

Mike Rounds last year said he was hoping to raise \$9 million for his U.S. Senate campaign. Imagine what \$9 million could do for education in South Dakota, or what the millions spent in Washington could do to help feed the nation's hungry. Any way you look at it, the amount of money spent on these political campaigns - which do nothing but make the constituents frustrated - is ludicrous. These campaigns certainly do not facilitate the informed and reasoned selection of the best person for the job. They merely use partial truths and sensationalism to play on people's fears.

- Eliminate midterm elections. In an op-ed article in The New York Times, authors David

Schanzer and Jay Sullivan advocate for this very thing saying, "less than 40 percent of the electorate will bother to vote, even though candidates, advocacy groups and shadowy 'super PACs' will have spent more than \$1 billion to air more than two million ads to influence the election." That appalling waste of money will not lead to meaningful discourse between warring parties. And anyone with ears has learned to distrust every word uttered in every political commercial ever to invade our homes, so what is gained?

If we have the courage to weed out the riffraff, maybe we can restore our government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Alan L. Neville is a professor of education at Northern State University. The views are his and do not represent NSU.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

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Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

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