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Patching holes in Politics

In today's society, the general public has become detached from the politics of the modern world. One of the main issues is that they don't know enough about how the system works in order to form an unbiased opinion. Because of this, most people end up regurgitating what the media tells them instead of researching about the events occurring around them. For proof of this, ask anyone you meet about the upcoming electoral candidates. They may know who is running for president or vice president, but do they know who is running for governor, mayor, senator, or any of the other political offices? Odds are, they don't have a clue who's running for what in their own states and cities. If the voters are not aware of the candidates, then how can they be expected to express their own interests? We must reintroduce the people into the world of politics if we are to expect them to vote for who (or what) they desire.

Research into voting statistics show that "*U.S. turnout in the 2012 presidential election was 53.6%, based on 129.1 million votes cast and an estimated voting-age population of just under 241 million people*" (DeSilver). Based on this information, only a little more than half of eligible voters voted in the last election. This means that only half of the citizens' interests were represented in that election, while the other half was ignored entirely. The fact that only half of the people's interests are being served in our government is kind of worrying. Even more disturbing is one of the most common reasons why some Americans choose not to vote. Many Americans refuse to vote because of the belief that the Electoral College chooses the president and the other governmental officials (Zen college life). They feel that their vote has no meaning or purpose in the outcome of the election. This opinion has some truth to it. If a presidential candidate does not receive the popular vote, they can still be elected president through the electoral college vote(Winger). However, the reality is that the popular vote of the people is supposed to influence the decision of the Electoral College. Only in rare cases has the Electoral

College elected a candidate against the people's wishes. For example, "*The 2000 presidential election was the fourth election in U.S. history and the first in 112 years in which the eventual winner failed to win the popular vote*"(Wikipedia). In the history of the United States, the Electoral College has only gone against the popular vote four times. Based on those odds, it is safe to say that the popular vote still has a great impact on the presidential election. Those unsure about the meaning of their vote should take the initiative to research the laws and regulations about the elections. If the public is not aware of how the system works, they cannot be expected to function well while using it.

Another subject of politics that the public should be more informed about is centered around the political parties. The common misconception is that there are only two political parties in the US, known as the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Because of this belief, most citizens will only pay attention to the candidates sent out by those two parties. What they do not understand is that there are multiple parties running for all forms of political positions. This includes the libertarian party, the green party, the constitution party, and some people who choose to run independent. Every election cycle, these parties run for office and get blown away in a landslide by a republican or democrat candidate. This doesn't necessarily mean that the main party candidates were always superior to the secondary ones. The main reason these candidates never win is due to an extreme lack of exposure. The media is always blasting ads and promo videos about the main parties, so the general public is fooled into believing that these parties are the only ones that matter. Instead of being exposed to multiple viewpoints across multiple parties, they are instead greeted with a black and white image of two parties. This being said, one cannot ignore the impact that certain election laws place upon smaller parties. These include "*severe ballot access laws, discriminatory campaign finance laws, and candidate debates to which only the Republican and Democratic nominees are invited*"(Winger). Combining these institutional barriers with the extreme lack of exposure to the

public makes running third party almost impossible. It is important to make these facts known to the public so that we can introduce wider viewpoints to the American people.

So now that the disconnection between the people and politics has been verified, one question arises: How can we reconnect the two together? There are multiple ways to go about this. Reeducating the public is an obvious answer. Using social media to send out information about how voting works or who's running for what position would certainly be helpful. But the main problem is not that the public is not informed enough about politics. The problem is that they do not care. Politicians nowadays are believed to be deceitful and selfish, acting only out of greed or biases. While there are a number of politicians who would fit that description, that isn't true for all of them. Nevertheless, this bad reputation makes the public indifferent to all of the various occurrences within politics. This creates a circle of indifference between the public and the politicians. Those who don't vote are ignored by the politicians, and they, in turn, don't vote because the politicians ignore them. In order to reattach the people to politics, you have to make the public care again.

Having a good understanding of the political world is essential for a citizen. If you do not know the workings of your own government, you cannot expect to keep your rights especially if you lack the ability to fight for them. We as a country cannot expect to fix our problems without understanding the implications of our actions. We should know who we are choosing to put into power and how the process works. We should also know how to spot lies told and crimes committed by those we trusted with leadership. Without these understandings, we run the risk of severely damaging our political system through sheer ignorance. In order to transform our country, we must transform ourselves first.

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