

Better informed Voters: The issues confronting voters today are multitudinous and complex. Rarely do voters understand important and complicated issues (e.g., immigration, trade). Lacking in depth knowledge of relevant issues, they tend to vote for politicians who promise to fix things, or to pass legislation that will provide them with something they desire without a clear understanding of how these promises will be achieved, and without considering or understanding all of the consequences that will ensue if new legislation is passed.

One could cite many different examples. For example, a politician promises to reduce taxes but fail to mention what programs (e.g., education police protection, road maintenance, etc.) will be reduced or eliminated in order to maintain a balanced budget. Or promises to undertake deeply desired projects without explaining where money will be obtained to pay for them. Or promises to build a wall separating one country from another while fantasizing that the other country will willingly pay the costs of the wall. Of course, most such promises are usually quickly forgotten and/or discarded once the election is over and reality sets in.

In consequence, the votes of many people are rendered meaningless as they vote for candidates who promise impossible goals, or goals with unforeseen, and often undesirable consequences. These uninformed votes compromise the effectiveness of democracy. Some promises may even someday threaten our freedoms.

Parenthetically, and paradoxically, this problem has become worse as the growing quality and quantity of consumable goods has increased dramatically over the last 100 years. I believe, as recently as the 1930's, a large proportion of the population felt that they were doing well to have a steady job which provided food, shelter, clothing, and a few other amenities. Increasingly people have wanted medical care, good educational programs, reliable and comfortable transportation, vacations, sick leave, holidays, etc., etc. What used to comprise a satisfactory life is not longer sufficient. Unfortunately, the life they want is still out of reach for many Americans, e.g., many unskilled workers, aged individuals, individuals with disabilities, and other. We can expect increasing numbers of people to cast votes based on promises to fix things made by politicians who lack the knowledge or the will to do so.

Possible Partial Solution: There is little point in expecting people to invest heavily in studying complicated issues. However, there is a *partial* solution. It is based on two propositions. First, knowledgeable experts (not political advocates) can almost always explain complicated issues in straightforward ways that almost all people are capable of rapidly understanding, and that are based on reality, not fantasy. Second, many people watch at least one news show daily, and more could be encouraged to do so. Unfortunately most news shows devote too much time to useless nonsense. This was made clear during the 2016 election when every major news show had surrogates for the two major presidential candidate. These surrogates daily (hourly) spun absurd tales, with little regard to logic, facts, or truth, often to defend equally absurd statements by the candidates they were representing. From the standpoint of assisting voters to make up their minds who to vote for, the blathering of these surrogates was repetitive (almost all babbled the same nonsense hour after hour), lengthy, and rudely delivered. Frequently, the moderator could not control the discussion and at times 2 to 4 people would be trying to talk over each other creating a total waste of valuable air time. Almost inevitably, the

surrogates would avoid the question asked by the moderator and pivot as quick as possible to a litany of the many sins of the other candidate.

It would have been much more interesting and useful to listen to knowledgeable and fair minded individuals discuss the pros and cons of the issues that were paramount in the election (I rarely have heard a surrogate that I felt knew enough to do so intelligently). Refocusing news in this way, especially prior to an election when the majority of voters would be inclined to listen, would lead to a much more informed electorate, and perhaps to one that is less cynical and/or distrustful of the media.