

2nd Opinion: Why you should not vote in this presidential election

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Many years ago, my father was driving in the mountains of Colorado. As he rounded a corner, he was confronted with a large truck coming toward him in his lane. Apparently the truck was trying to pass another vehicle and stayed in the oncoming lane too long.



Terry Austin My father was forced to decide between the lesser of two terrible options: He could smash the oncoming truck head-on, or he could steer off the road and plummet down the side of the mountain. If you have ever driven in the Colorado mountains, you are aware it is not like driving into the bar ditch in West Texas.

He chose the lesser of the two, and, fortunately, his car was halted by the pine trees about 100 feet down the cliff. He lived to tell the story.

Unpleasant, no matter what

Sometimes life forces us to make a choice between two bad things, and the result is going to be unpleasant, no matter what choice we make.

Many people are feeling that way about the upcoming presidential election. There is not a good choice. Approval ratings for both candidates are at historic lows and are destined to get worse with the ongoing name-calling, mud-slinging and third-grade behavior that is characteristic of this year's campaign.

Each candidate has a small hard-core group of voters who wave their flag obnoxiously high, but for the most part, you hear people say, "I could never vote for ...," and they name one of the candidates. More people are voting against someone this year than the number of people who are voting for someone.

Much of the campaign rhetoric consists of saying, "If this person is elected, terrible things will happen to our country." I get it. We have two bad choices. I feel like my father must have felt as he steered his Buick over the edge of the cliff. He didn't have a better choice.

Legitimate options

But we do have options. There are some legitimate options that keep us from being forced to choose between the lesser of two evils.

The most obvious option is that when you go to vote, you will find other candidates' names on the ballot. At least 1,751 folks have filed the paperwork necessary to be considered a candidate for president. Obviously, you will not have to read through hundreds of names while in the voting booth, since most of those people will have long departed the race, but there will be other names for consideration.

I have not studied all the other candidates, and I'm sure you haven't, either. However, I'm confident there is not one I would consider a much more viable option than the two main party nominees. Most of them are narrowly focused in their platform, and none of those focuses scratches my itch.

Just don't vote

However, there is still another option that keeps us from having to decide between the lesser of two evils. That option is not to vote. That's right; just don't vote in the presidential election—although that doesn't mean you should also avoid all the other issues and races on the ballot. Skip the top of the ballot, and don't check either name.

In suggesting that you not vote, I realize [I'm going against the grain of what is typically considered good citizenship](#). One of the rights we have as Americans is to vote. People have fought and died, and many others have sacrificed in countless ways so I can vote. My vote is to be cherished, and I must not ever let it be wasted.

However, in suggesting that you not vote, I don't believe it is a waste, nor is it bad citizenship. It is simply using your vote for a purpose other than electing the next president. In fact, let me suggest two things you can accomplish by not voting.

Make a statement

First, it is an opportunity to make a statement that needs to be made, especially by and to Christians. By not voting, I can place my hope in something other than the president of the United States. The Christian faith is very clear that we are not to trust government as our source of safety and supply.

If I remember correctly, the first time I ever saw a Hebrew National Hot Dog was at Fenway Park in Boston. Their slogan caught my attention: "We answer to a higher authority." It's catchy advertising for a hot dog, and as followers of Jesus, we should brandish about a similar sentiment.

This is a much-needed word to American Christians. We have come to the point where folks believe a professing, Scripture-understanding, caring,

Christ-witnessing president is not a Christian, but a vulgar, greedy, dishonest man who claims his favorite Scripture is “Do unto others ...” is the one who will lead us to our Christian promised land.

It seems to me that if I am not trusting in our next president to be our savior, then it is fine to make that proclamation by withholding my vote.

Start a protest

A second reason to not vote in the upcoming presidential election is to make a protest. If the Democratic and Republican parties can nominate any unacceptable candidate they want and expect us to all fall in line come November, they will have no reason to change. By withholding our vote, we can make a statement we are not playing that game any longer.

If enough of us withhold our votes, they eventually will have to listen. In fact, if enough of us join the protest, we can start another viable party—but I’m not advocating or expecting that to happen.

Another way to “count”

Now, many of you are going to argue by reminding me that withholding my vote is not going to make any difference. If that’s true, why do we see so many commercials saying, “Your vote counts”? What I’m saying is that my one vote counts just as much by withholding it as it does by throwing it away on an unqualified candidate.

In fact, if we are so unhappy with the choices we have this year, voter turnout should be at an all-time low. If the major political parties can’t get enough people to vote for their candidate, they will be forced to reconsider how they choose candidates. The reason we have such bad candidates is because the nominating process is broken, and unless we speak up, it never will change.

Revolutionary movements typically begin with one—or perhaps a few—person(s) standing up and saying, “No more!” Perhaps by withholding your vote, you can be that person who is willing to stand up and say, “No more!”

If you choose not to vote, no doubt, people will say you have no right to complain about the one who is elected. Hogwash! (I’ve always wanted to use that word.) Just because I’m too smart to waste my vote on a bad candidate does not mean I renounce my freedom of speech. The truth is, after a few months in office, your candidate will probably give me plenty of reasons to say, “I told you so.”

It is a sad day to feel like you must hold your nose when voting for president. However, instead of checking the box for the lesser of two evils, perhaps it is time for us to stand up and be counted in a different way. Perhaps it’s time to start an “I’m not voting” campaign as a way of demanding the system be repaired.

I’ll design the buttons if you will set up the phone bank.

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