

## **American Idol for President!**

Seventy-four million American votes were cast for American Idol elect Jordin Sparks. Any presidential candidate would be proud to get that many votes. In a primary, that would be an overwhelming and unimaginable number of people, even on Super Tuesday. There is no question that our entertainers, even would-be entertainers, are much more popular than presidents or other political figures. The people that hold our lives in their trust, send our boys abroad to be killed in foreign wars and have bargained away our economic future receive very little attention from the public as compared with the American Idol. Whose fault is that? We can blame the media, the politicians, or anybody we want to, but of course the basic problem lies within our own priorities. Every once in awhile, a politician will have some star power and impress us, like John Kennedy; but otherwise, we have very little interest in the political process.

Maybe what we need to do is change the political process, and elect our Presidents the way we elected the American Idol. After all, in Europe there are runoff elections. That happens in other countries because no one candidate gets the majority or a statutory plurality, and they keep having to run elections until two candidates are left. In our country, thanks to the power of incumbency and money, we generally only have two candidates for President by the time the November elections roll around.

It would not be hard to elect a President the way we elect an American Idol. We simply can have a number of rolling primaries like we do now. Instead of voting for the most popular candidate, we simply can vote for who gets eliminated. If we had this vote over a matter of weeks or months, we would get down to one candidate in each party. We then could have the final election at which either the Republican or the Democrat is eliminated and the winner becomes President. To really make this work, we would have to have some sort of television process by which the candidates show their merit. The heck with all this silly debating stuff. Let us have votes of elimination based upon important things, like singing and dancing ability, joke-telling skills, athletic prowess, and maybe even - perish the thought - games of good judgment. The past American Idols, after all, have gone on to successful careers because the public is able to judge a person's quality in side-by-side competition where they merely eliminate the pretenders to excellence while continuing to observe the survivors. That is what we need in our political process! We need some excitement, we need some continuity, and we need an opportunity to watch the evolution of a candidate.

Let's take a simple example: each of the Republican and Democratic candidates would appear once a week on television, and would have to make up the best patriotic song. The next week, the candidates would have to show if they could waltz like George Washington. The third week, we could see how the candidates would do managing a troop of soldiers in Iraq for a week. The next week, we could have the candidates do a forced march in Afghanistan. The following week, we could have the candidates each come up with the best economic plan to eliminate dependency on foreign oil within five years. The next week, each candidate would have to come up with the best plan for balancing the budget, solving the Medicare crisis, and developing

a workable plan for universal health care. The public would, in essence, be voting on the confidence level they have in the several candidates each and every single week by eliminating those who simply do not cut the mustard.

Sound crazy? Who said that desperate times deserve desperate measures? Actually it was said during the American Revolutionary War, and the statement may be more true today than ever before. The bottom line is that we need to keep people interested, excited, and engaged. It is not the fault of the candidates or the public that we have a poor system for evaluating our candidates. The three-minute mumbo-jumbo of the Republican candidates or the Democratic candidates at the various recent forums could lull the worst insomniac to sleep. It took a small outrage on the part of candidate Giuliani at the last Republicans' candidate forum even to raise an eyebrow, but you can be sure that the public was far less interested in that than the plight of the American Idol competition.

It is time that we had a rolling competition where candidates were eliminated week by week based upon the specifics of a solution or an attribute of personality and character. Let's get real - this is 2007!

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