

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER



It's a week after the elections and I'm trying to figure out whether I've won or lost, whether I'm pleased or disappointed. I suspect I was probably a typical voter: I won some, lost some. The democratic process is a mess and the only good thing about it is that it's better than any other system. To be at its best, a popular government like ours depends on having knowledgeable voters. Unfortunately, we don't have that. We have voters like me who don't always know what we're talking about or what we're voting for. We often vote for one candidate over another for dumb reasons. Maybe we've seen him - usually "him" - on television a few times, or we've seen his picture in the paper and we like what he looks like. Maybe we know about a stand he's taken on a single issue. We agreed with him, so we vote for him.

Most voters don't have the time, the interest or the knowledge to decide what course of action our country should take on any issue, so politicians represent us. We owe our good politicians a lot because they run the country for us. We simply are not knowledgeable enough to figure it out for ourselves. For one thing, we're too busy doing something else that interests us more. We complain about our politicians but we put our country and ourselves in their hands.

We like to think our democracy is perfect, but it's far from perfect because 9 times out of 10 when we vote for someone, we aren't voting for anything. We're not voting for or against the war in Iraq, we're not voting for or against higher taxes, we are not influencing our country's foreign policy. We're just voting for a person who we have some vague feeling thinks more or less the same as we think about certain issues. We have no guarantee, though. The successful politician can go to Washington and do what he pleases. We have zero amount of control over what the politician we put in office votes for or against. In fact, 99 out of 100 times, we don't even know there was a vote on an issue.

What I'm saying is, we can be proud of our democracy but we should keep in mind that it is imperfect and not always representative of what we think or how we would vote if we were in Congress.

When I put a check mark after a lot of names and for or against several issues on the ballot this past Election Day I was proud of myself

for going to all the trouble of voting. The question is, did those few little marks I made represent everything I believe about the important issues facing us? I hope not. My brain isn't that small.

Calling a visit to the voting booth on Election Day an "expression of opinion" is hot air. I simply voted for a couple of people that I hope will vote the way I would, but all I have is hope. My choices aren't bound to do what I want them to do. Our democracy doesn't work that directly.

The fact is, democracy is such a fragile institution that it's surprising it didn't collapse years ago. That we keep such a fragile institution, the best in the world, alive and mostly well, is a testament to our civility and our hope, probably the traits that in the long run, make our country the greatest of them all.

This is the last issue of FOCUS' 15th year of national publication. I thank our loyal readers who have made us the #1 circulated magazine serving the professions of respiratory care and sleep medicine and I wish to thank our writers and columnists for their contributions that graced our pages in 2006. Lastly, I wish to thank the companies who advertised in FOCUS in 2006. Their doing so enabled 56,000+ professionals to enjoy FOCUS free of charge.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the April FOCUS conference as well. We've assembled a great slate of speakers (including Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as our Keynote Speaker) and have some fun surprises in store for all who will be joining us. The conference will be held April 19-21, 2007 at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville TN. Many more details about the conference are available on our website located at www.foocus.com.

Until then I wish you and yours a happy, safe and memorable holiday season.

Warm regards,

Bob Miglino RRT BSRT MPS - Publisher



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