

## Election Reform

Well, the election season is off and running. I know, I know, it seems like it just ended. It did. That's how we do things here. Folks are not so much into the practice of governing as they are into the practice of running for the chance to govern. It's a little like a sports season with strong teams and weak teams, dark horses and brighter horses, upsets in the making and crushing defeats that are all too easy to call. Like a sports season, there are folks making picks and figuring out odds and blogging the dirt and anointing the chosen, people making a living by watching the folks in the practice of running for the chance to govern. These expert watchers have agreed on one factor that is going to be key for any candidate. Read this next sentence and think about it for a minute.

*It will cost one hundred million dollars for any serious candidate to merely get to the first primaries.*

That's what you will have to lay on the table in the yearlong run up to the primaries. That's what you have to be sure you can easily raise in order to get your backers to give you even more. That's the amount that you must put in the bank, without breaking a sweat, before the real spending starts. The ante to get into the Presidential Game is \$100,000,000. It's astounding!

This means that Hillary and Rudy and John and Barack and Sam and Dennis and John and Chuck and Bill and a few others already know they can put that kind of money on the line. They already know where it's coming from. For each of them the hundred million is assumed!

Let's try to put this in perspective. Suppose you were ambitious, very ambitious about doing something big. Let's say you had a plan that you believed in. Let's say you thought you could get some backing for it. Let's say your friends, your family, your old classmates, your business colleagues, your lodge mates, your in laws and the congregation at your church all said they'd like to support you. How much money do you think you could raise? Seriously, how much?

I went through the above exercise for myself and came up with the sum of \$9,350.00. When I throw in my own resources the total jumps to \$9,850.00. I wonder who I could call to fill in the remaining \$99,990,150.00?

One hundred million dollars is a lot of money and there's only one way to raise it. You raise that kind of money when you can reasonably make the case that you might well be the next president of the United States. You, me, any of us could raise the money if we could look potential supporters in the eye and say, "If you do this you will have the ear of the President. Call, and you'll get through. Let me know what you need and I'll listen."

Well, obviously, you and I can't reasonably make that case but there are a dozen or so people out there who can. There are a dozen or so people who can promise their supporters that they will be on the short list after the next presidential election. Imagine that.

I used to think that public financing of elections would be the answer but it's obvious now that public financing is very nearly dead. All the major candidates will refuse it this time around because it would severely limit their bankrolls. To accept it would be to limit their funding to roughly one half of what the other front-runners will raise. Game over.

So saying, I am now ready to propose that only the obscenely rich should run for president. We should pass a Bill or Amendment or whatever it takes stating that you need at least a billion dollars in personal worth before you can run. So the Constitution would read... at least 35 years of age, native born American, a Billionaire etc. etc. Only someone who is this wealthy could finance a presidential campaign and not make promises to anyone. Only someone this wealthy could refuse calls from anyone, even Bono. Only someone this wealthy could afford to listen to people who make sense rather than people who paid for the Office.

Everything would be easier. We could just read the annual Forbes list of wealthiest Americans and know who the possible candidates are. There would be no annoying check box on our 1040's giving a dollar to the campaign. We would have the comfort of knowing that whoever won the Office would be taking an enormous cut in pay, power and prestige. In short someone who would be doing it as a public service. Imagine that.

Besides, in the next presidential election, I'd love to see Melinda Gates kick Donald Trump's butt.