

The Delray Democrat

There's No Such Thing as "Not Voting"¹

Michael Cantwell

Under what is essentially a two-party system, people who fail to cast a ballot are effectively voting against the candidate whose values they most closely share. And until we have an instant runoff system, people who cast protest votes for third- and fourth-party candidates with no chance of winning are effectively voting for the candidate they most despise.

Forty years ago I was one of them, choosing to vote for the ecologist and environmentalist Barry Commoner because I found Jimmy Carter far too conservative. I quickly learned from my mistake as I watched a grade B movie actor adopt and expand what has become a four-decades-long assault on American workers. (See "Income Shares," below.)

That's why I voted for Al Gore in 2000 even though I had great admiration for Ralph Nader, and even though I lived in New York and thus had a free vote.

Had Nader not run, it is almost certain that Gore would have won Florida and with it the White House. That said, it was five Republican judges who stopped the Florida recount in a nakedly partisan, widely discredited decision. Three had been appointed by Ronald Reagan, which allows us to draw a straight line from Reagan's election to Bush's selection.

Fast forward to 2016, when a grade B reality TV star stunned the media (if not those of us who'd been paying attention) by winning the Electoral College. The election was much closer than in 1980, and there's no question that Donald Trump owes his Electoral College victory to those voters in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania who either stayed home in protest or voted for a third- or fourth-party candidate with no chance of winning.

If the 2018 midterms are any measure, these stay-at-home and protest voters were fast learners. The turnout was the highest in over a century and up more than one third from the 2014 midterms

This is a hopeful sign. If, we dispatch Donald Trump next year, we can begin undoing the destruction he has caused, first by repealing the Republican "tax cut," which transfers wealth from ordinary Americans and small businesses to multimillionaires and multinationals. We can pass laws that will reduce rather than increase the numbers of uninsured. We can put stewards in place of grifters in all Cabinet and administrative offices. And begin combatting climate change, the existential threat of our time.

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, August 2019, p. 5.

But one thing that we can never undo or recover from is the stolen Supreme Court seat in which Neil Gorsuch sits or alter the fact that 54-year-old Brett (“What Goes Around, Comes Around”) Kavanaugh sits in place of the 83-year-old Anthony Kennedy, reducing the average age of this Republican majority. Even if a Democrat is elected in 2020, these men will remain a threat to *Roe v. Wade* as well as any progressive legislation.

Worse still, if Trump is reelected and gets to nominate replacements for Justices Ginsburg and Breyer, he will create a Republican supermajority on the Supreme Court that will last for decades.