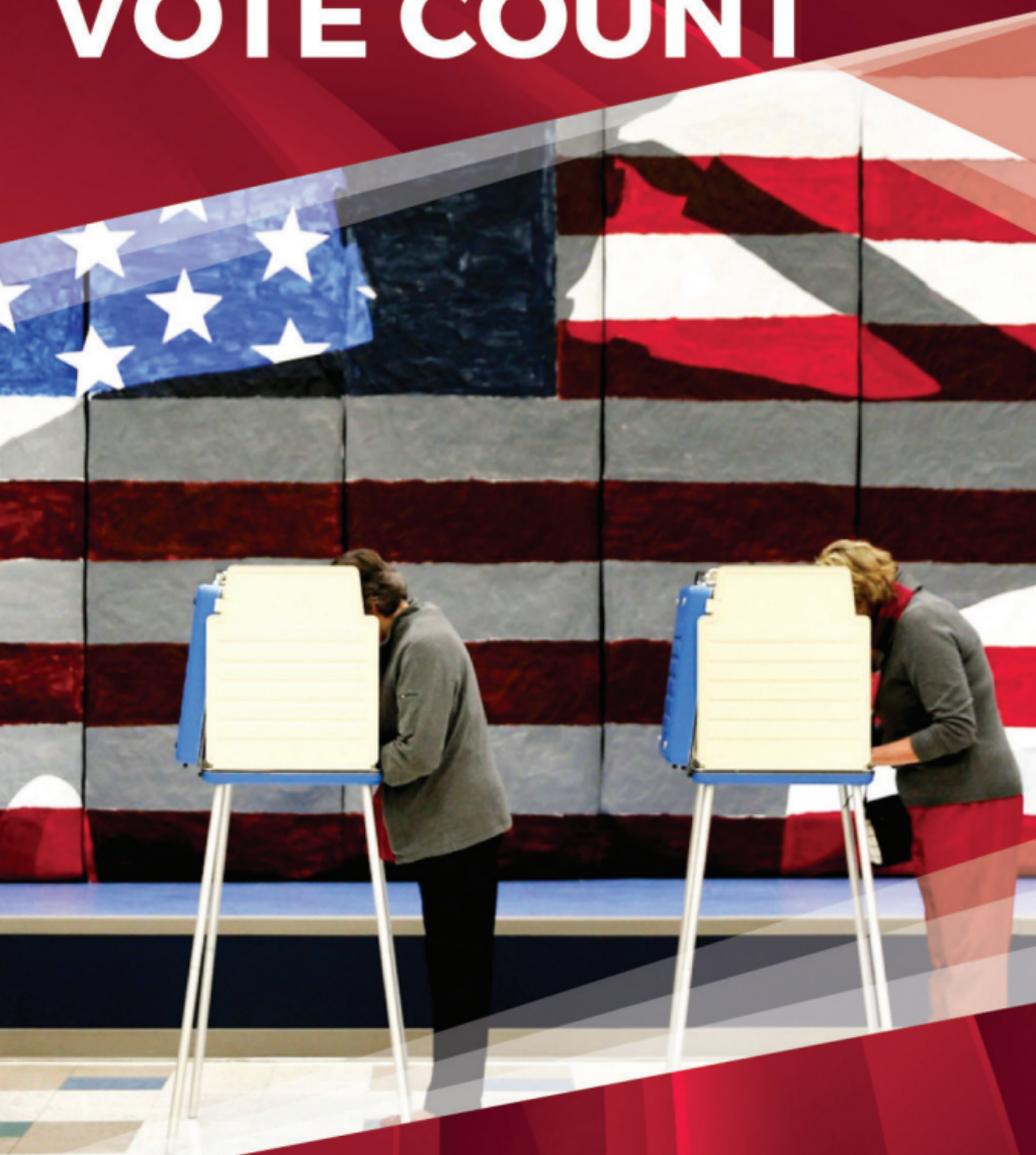
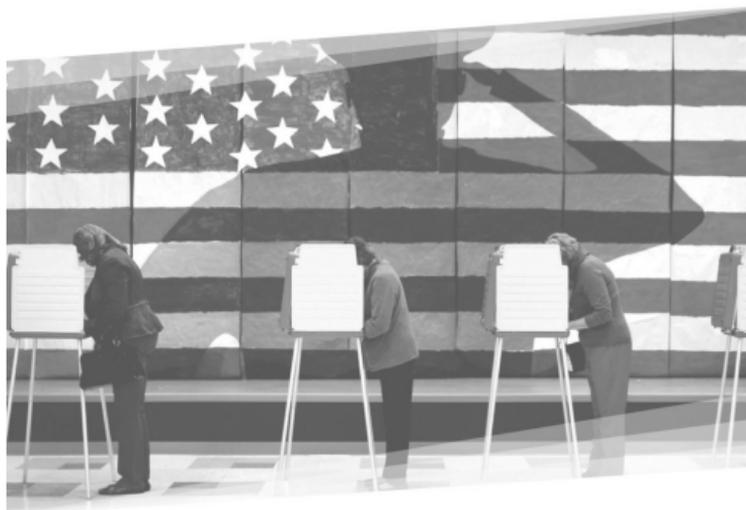


A BIBLICAL VIEW ON
**MAKING YOUR
VOTE COUNT**



KERBY ANDERSON

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT



Once again we are in the election season and need to think about our political involvement in the electoral process. Who we elect to office will determine our laws and our taxes. Judges that are appointed and confirmed will affect life, liberty, and property. So much is at stake at every election.

As Christians we need to consider what role we will play in the next election. We have a civic responsibility because we are both citizens of heaven and citizens of

earth. In order to assess our involvement, let's try to answer a few questions. First, have Christians been good stewards of the vote?

Stewardship of the Vote

When the 2016 election was upon us, we interviewed a number of experts on *Point of View* to review how born-again Christians had done in previous elections. They talked about the Christian voter participation in the 2012 presidential election. There were 90 million born again Christians of voting age. About 77 million of them were registered to vote. And 51 million of them voted in that election.

That means there were 39 million eligible Christian voters who did not vote or were not registered to vote in 2012. The 39 million broke down this way: 13 million were not registered and 26 million were registered but did not go to the polls. The born-again Christian voter participation was only slightly better in 2016 than in 2012.

In the New Testament, Jesus says that believers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). We have a stewardship responsibility when it comes to using our gifts, talents, and opportunities. Jesus also described the importance of this stewardship in His parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). He was critical of the one servant who buried his talent (Matthew 25:26). We as voters should not “bury our talent” but use the opportunity God has given us to vote responsibly.

It is worth mentioning that the born-again Christian voter participation during the primaries and in off-year general elections is much lower. Although that is a sad statistic indeed, it is a reminder that your vote in a primary or in an off-year election is even more important. In fact, the impact of one vote is felt even more when fewer people go to the polls to vote.

These sorry statistics bring us to

another question. Is there anything you can do to encourage other like-minded Christians to register to vote?

Unregistered Voters

Why are many born-again Christians not registered to vote? Former talk show host Jane Chastain did a survey to try to answer that question. She found that some people feared that if they were registered to vote they would be called for jury duty. It is not only a poor reason (since Christians should be willing to serve), but it is also flawed since most cities and counties don't just use the voter rolls in calling people to jury duty.

The more important question is: What can we do about this problem of Christians who don't even bother to register to vote? Some Christians absolutely refuse to vote in an election, and that should be their right. But I think many Christians perhaps just need some help or encouragement to vote.

In the 2016 election, there was one

Christian group that used sophisticated computer programs to identify potential Christian voters who were currently not registered to vote. They also found that the voting margin between candidates was far lower than the number of unregistered voters. For example, the two main candidates in Missouri in 2008 had a margin of a mere 3,903 votes, while the number of unregistered Christian voters was 102,522. Another example was North Carolina. In that election, the margin was 14,177 votes in an area with 281,212 unregistered Christian voters.

As a listener to *Point of View*, I know you and your family are probably registered to vote. But I encourage you to talk to other people in your sphere of influence who may not be registered to vote and encourage them to register. As you can see from these statistics, registering like-minded Christians can make a difference in an election.

Once Christians are registered to

vote they need accurate information. Where can you and other Christians go to be educated about the candidates and issues?

Educating Voters

Once a Christian is registered to vote, he or she needs to know more about the issues and the candidates. In the past, *Point of View* has posted election information in the “Pray, Organize, Vote” election resource section of the website. We post articles, videos, and a link to extensive voter guides from various groups. You can learn the votes of incumbents and see how candidates answered surveys and questionnaires.

One key issue is the abortion issue. Many pro-life leaders are saying that being pro-life can be a winning issue. Marjorie Dannenfelser has been on my radio program to explain her commentary on why the “Pro-life Movement is Winning the Culture—and Elections.” Polling statistics and recent elections all point to the fact

that being pro-life is a winning issue in most campaigns.

The most recent Gallup poll found that a majority of Americans (55%) oppose abortion in all or most circumstances. A CNN poll back in 2014 put that number even higher at 58 percent. These millions of pro-life voters should vote for pro-life candidates.

The problem has been that many candidates say they are pro-life but fail to support pro-life legislation when the pressure is on. Some politicians who are Catholic may say they accept the doctrine of the church but then go on to say they also believe in a woman's right to choose.

We should ask if the candidate believes that an unborn child "is a person from the moment of fertilization, and thus entitled to have his or her life protected by the Constitution." And we should ask the candidate what he or she plans to do to provide legal protection for these children. These are pointed questions we should

ask as we look at their voting record or how they answered a candidate survey.

Many of these voter guides provide not only information about where the candidate stands on vital issues but which groups support his or her candidacy. That is helpful especially in judicial races where the candidates are reticent to say how they might rule on a moral issue.

Churches and Pastors

During the election season, Christians (and especially pastors) want to know how IRS regulations affect what churches might want to do to educate the congregation. Fortunately, Kelly Shackelford and First Liberty Institute have put together a legal summary of what pastors can and cannot do during an election.

Because the church is a 501(c)(3) organization, there are two things pastors cannot do during an election. First, a pastor or a church may not use the organization to endorse one candidate over another. Of course, "this does not

mean that a pastor—in his individual capacity as an American citizen—may not endorse one candidate over another.”

Second, a pastor or a church may not give its money to one candidate over another. “This doesn’t mean that pastors or church members, in their individual capacities as American citizens, cannot donate to the political campaign of their choice.”

There are four things pastors can do during an election. First, pastors can speak about political issues. “It is a misconception that pastors cannot address political issues—even “hot button” issues like abortion, same-sex marriage, and gun control—from the pulpit. Any person or entity that attempts to silence a pastor for addressing these issues is violating that pastor’s constitutional rights under the First Amendment.”

Second, pastors can educate their congregation about politics. “Pastors are

fully protected when it comes to issues like educating members of their church about the political process, handing out non-partisan voter guides and fliers so members can read about each candidate's platform, and even providing the opportunity for members to register to vote."

Third, pastors can invite political candidates to speak at their church. "Contrary to popular belief, pastors and churches can invite political candidates to address their congregation from the pulpit, as long as all the candidates in a race are included in the invitation."

Fourth, pastors can participate in politics in their individual capacity. "Serving in ministry does not disqualify pastors or other religious leaders from their individual rights as U.S. citizens. Pastors can participate on political campaigns, hold office on political campaigns, and even endorse a candidate in their individual capacity."

Citizenship Quotient

Before we close, let me suggest a test you can give yourself and other Christians to see what your “Citizenship IQ” might be. IQ stands for “Involvement Quotient.” Richard Ford, who has been a guest on *Point of View*, developed this test a number of years ago.

First, name your legislators. You get 10 points if you can name your two U.S. Senators and another 10 points if you can name your U.S. Representative. You get 10 more points if you can name your State Senator and 10 more points if you can name your State Representative. If you could do all of that, you now have 40 points. By the way, Richard Ford has found that only 5 percent can answer these questions correctly.

You get 10 more points if you prayed for one of your legislators by name. You also get 10 points if you are registered to vote and another 10 points if you have contacted one of your legislators in the

past two years. And then you get 10 points each if you voted in the last three elections. If you did all of these things, you would have 100 points.

Richard Ford has given this test to various groups where he has been speaking and has found that the average score is 20.6. Now think about that for a moment. If you are registered to vote and voted in just one of the last three elections, you would have a score of 20 even if you didn't know the names of any of your legislators and never prayed for any of them.

It doesn't take long to see that we have a lot to do if we are to be good citizens in America. What was your score? Do you know the names of your legislators? Have you contacted them about an important issue? Are you registered to vote, and have you voted in recent elections? These are questions we should ask ourselves if we are to be good citizens of America.

Point of View

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