

Ron Paul rakes in reefer votes



Phil Jarrett

Imagine if presidential nominees were elected by trendiness — the sublime ability to make the sexy 20-somethings swoon and the art critics snap their fingers in approval.

Ron Paul would be a shoe-in. Trendy here should be read as rock-critic cool where the candidate is so obscure, only truly refined tastes could appreciate him. The mentality is one of “everyone else would vote for this candidate if they knew what was good for them.”

Strict constitutionalism has a renegade tinge to it that makes it seem cool. So cool, in fact, that it is making usually liberal individuals think about voting for someone on the Republican ticket. It would certainly seem that Ron Paul is so conservative that he actually is not. How indie is that?

Our various crises: health care, the economy and Iraq certainly seem to stem from a government very out of sync with its constituency. Bureaucracy has turned programs sold to the general public as directly benefiting them into a shortcut for profits on Wall Street. Of the Republican candidates, Ron Paul best illuminates these issues without the doublespeak. In

a political environment full of campaigns offering change, Paul’s stated intentions to dismantle big government certainly seem drastic enough to make change more than a promise.

The problem is that street-cred does not win elections, and thus Ron Paul does not stand a chance.

This could be partially because members of the Republican party take cheap shots at him during the debates. They do. It could have something to do with the mainstream media trying to marginalize him. They are. It could have something to do with his code of ethics, which has kept him out of the pockets of the big businesses that supply the funds that create a frontrunner. The man is broke by comparison.

However, it is not any conspiracy that is going to bring about the end of the Ron Paul revolution. Rather, it will be a warranted lack of faith from the American people.

Although most Paul supporters are average citizens, some of the more vocal are ... shall we say, off-putting. For starters, there are the gun nuts who love Ron Paul’s thoughts on Second Amendment rights. Then there are the racists, like Kirksville’s favorite white supremacist, Alex Linder, who recently posted a link to the local Paul campaign on his Web site. The Ron Paul campaign currently is fighting bad press over dated documents that he approved containing xenophobic remarks. Finally, but certainly not least, there are the college stoners.

While the pot-smoking Ron Paul supporter is most certainly a stereotype, a phone call to the Ron Paul headquarters during the Iowa caucus had one Index reporter receiving bad information from a young man who said his last name was pronounced ‘Reefer-seed.’ A Google search has confirmed this individual has performed this stunt elsewhere while endorsing his candidate. Although Ron Paul does

not have any real say over who endorses him, he should have tighter reigns on who is answering the phones in his own camp because despite their ability to make me laugh, they are only going to damage his image in the eyes of the general public.

Aside from Ron Paul’s bad company, his romantic ideas about what the government should be are unattainable in any immediate future. In the unlikely event that he is elected President, we can expect him to veto a good deal of the bills that make their way to his desk based upon his past voting record. Even more, we can expect his minimalist approach to the federal government to be met with controversy, if not total rejection in both the Houses. The end result would be as any other candidate’s: broken promises and finger pointing at Congress.

Having now lost some of my favorite candidates to dropping out or the fog of obscurity, I have come to embrace a kind of strategic compromise that looks to further the lesser of any given evils. I would recommend that Paul die-hards do the same, especially if they are supporting him for the trendy reason that his strict constitutionalism looks like a deceptively liberal stance. If this is the case, do what you want on Super Tuesday.

However, if November rolls around and Ron Paul is running as a third-party candidate, as many suspect he will, understand that any vote for him may in essence be a vote taken away from a candidate with views closer to your own.

Phil Jarrett is a senior communication and philosophy and religion major from Chesterfield, Mo.

Run, Bloomberg, Run!



Nathan Atkinson

Dear Michael Bloomberg, For the love of all that’s good in the world, please run. Something needs to change.

Sincerely, Nathan.

There, I said it. From that, you might be able to tell that I’ve recently become disillusioned with America’s two-party method of selecting our president, and things need to be mixed up a bit.

A viable third-party candidate is just what we need, and Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City is just that candidate. Not only is he a popular mayor with moderate policies, but also he doesn’t have to worry about trying to win financial support despite being outside the major parties. It’s well-known that he’s a very wealthy businessman. He could spend a truckload of his money for a campaign without even missing it.

There is not enough progress on key issues such as immigration, the war in Iraq and Social Security. Now, I’m not saying that I agree with Bloomberg on all of his stances, but a third-party candidate certainly might foster more progress. Take recent events in Washington, for example.

The Republicans control the White House, the Democrats have Congress and nothing really ever gets done. The Democrats might try something, but the President vetoes it, and when the President pushes for something, Congress thwarts it. Obviously, I can’t predict the future, and I can’t say with absolute certainty that a third party candidate like Bloomberg would have a better chance at getting things accomplished, but he would not be any worse at it than the Democrats and Republicans who have had 150 years of opportunities.

The Democrats and Republicans largely have failed to accomplish what they set out to do. There have been promises of fixing Social Security, controlling the border and getting out of Iraq, but I am satisfied with none of the results.

I do realize that our government was created with its checks and balances and division of powers with the intent to make sure nothing gets done too fast, but it also originally was created in absence of political parties, which only have slowed the process further. It has gotten to the point that our major political parties are more worried about struggling with each other than over the issues.

Any third-party candidate might not necessarily have a better chance at getting things done, but Bloomberg specifically would fare well. Bloomberg was a Democrat until 2001 when he joined the Republican party, which he left in 2007 and became an independent. I’ve had enough of Democrats and Republicans claiming to be bipartisan and “reaching across the aisle” when so few actually do. Bloomberg would not be involved in these partisan games and could be someone who actually would make compromises.

I am confident that all the major candidates, a third party included, would continue to attack each other viciously, whether or not it was related to partisan politics. But it can’t be denied that Bloomberg (or any independent, for that matter) might have an easier time making compromises because there would be less of the traditional “us versus them” mentality of partisan politics.

Finally, although most of the major candidates are promising change, I hardly even know what change they’re actually referring to. What is this abstract, promised change? Although I don’t know what any of them really are going to change, I have very little faith they will do much. Change needs to be more than a campaign slogan.

A real change would disrupt the grip of power that the Republicans and Democrats have over our political system and help the country move forward by bridging the gap of the political parties. I do not think that Bloomberg drastically would change the direction of policies and bring about whatever “change” people often interpret as promises in slogans, but I do think shaking things up a bit in the American political system would be a good thing.

If a third-party candidate like Bloomberg were to win the presidency (or heck, even make a serious dent in the electoral college), it would cause some serious introspection on the parts of the major parties, which hopefully would bring about needed change in the system.

I have to tell you, I’m not a diehard Bloomberg guy — I can’t even guarantee that I’d vote for him if he were running. I’m just getting pessimistic about anything being any different a year from now. Campaign slogans tell me that things will be, but I’d rather take my chances with a third party to really make a change.

Nathan Atkinson is a senior political science and philosophy and religion major from Glasgow, Mo.

Marketing candidates like movies means less attention to the issues



Andrew Kindiger

Once again, election buzz is circulating as polished bureaucrats take the stage to dazzle their audiences while trying to secure the vote. And just as politicians begin to sweat, so do the people. Naturally, “Who to vote for?” is one of many questions one asks as candidates battle over primary slots. But who and what a person votes for have become two very different things.

It can be bad enough that Americans are forced to pick between only two candidates, but what does it really matter if in the end we don’t end up voting for issues or even know what they are? This time of year, the marketing for a particular political candidate becomes so dense that complex issues that face the nation are condensed into a single name and slogan. All too often, questions regarding foreign policy, domestic spending or taxes are simply articulated by asking “Obama or Clinton?”

It’s really just the nature of things, though — whether you’re talking about politics or entertainment, one name can really say it all. The new film “Cloverfield” has been able to drum up considerable attention through its advertisers’ use of viral marketing.

A short trailer for “Cloverfield,” suggests that a monster has attacked New York City. The preview ends abruptly and without much information, which encourages interested viewers to surf the Web in search of more information about the film. No one knows what’s really going to happen until they go and see the film because the production has been so secretive. For all we know, the monster could be shown only in the first five minutes of the film, and then the camera could fall on a frightened citizen who wants to use his last few hours on Earth, as well as the remainder of the movie, to convince the audience why Mike Huckabee is the best candidate for president in 2008.

Indulging in marketing schemes is a fun way to pick a movie but a dangerous way to pick a president. Sure, no one really knows who is going to be the best president until one of the candidates actually makes it to the Oval Office (and even then, we usually don’t get the chance to go back and analyze a candidate from a previous election cycle to determine who was better).

But there are better ways to decide than getting caught in a wave of uninformed ideologues shouting buzzwords and rallying behind a single concept. It’s easy to start out objectively and have hopes of voting for the best possible candidate, but it’s also easy to drift mindlessly onto the campaign trail when promises are made in the height of the election season.

Mike Huckabee actually was the first candidate who got me thinking about the dangers associated with political advertising because of his Chuck Norris endorsement ad. At first, I thought it was

just a petty attempt to win votes, but it became more of a red flag when he won the Republican caucus in Iowa. Even though Chuck Norris probably isn’t responsible (too much) for this success, Huckabee’s embrace of pop culture combined with his recent win would suggest that some people lack a degree of depth when selecting a leader. If you’re not convinced, just look at the country’s recent track record.

People, especially students, need to be concerned with falling into marketing schemes around election time because politicians set these traps for a reason. It’s a lot easier to pal around with Chuck Norris than to structure a solid political platform, just like it’s easy to run under an appealing slogan or idea like Hope, Change or Experience. Don’t get me wrong, I’m a big fan of Barack Obama, but I’m hoping people are going to look beyond his willingness to hope and desire for change so they can make a judgment on whether he can lead the country.

With a collection of new voters going to the polls in November, let’s try something different. Let’s try to take the politics out of politics to a degree and concentrate on making a decision based on issues of importance rather than a name of relevance. Maybe I’m over-exaggerating our current problems, but I guess we’ll really know how much trouble we’re in if the “Cloverfield” monster turns out to be Hillary Clinton.

Andrew Kindiger is a freshman English major from Liberty, Mo.

Supporters of change should start with desegregating St. Louis schools



Daniel Glossenger

A few months ago, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released some numbers. They didn’t make a lot of waves in the news, and I doubt you’ve looked at them. But they’re going to haunt you, if not now, then sometime in the future, and if not you, then your children or your children’s children.

A quick round-up: The number of African-Americans who graduated from St. Louis city schools declined by six students from 2006 to 2007, while the number who dropped out increased by nearly 200 in the same period. Of course, low graduation rates aren’t just an African-American problem in St. Louis. The graduation rate for whites was only 3 percent higher than for African-Americans, and the Hispanic and Asian populations also graduated from high school at a lower rate than statewide averages. All of that is old news for pretty much anyone with a pulse who’s ever read about St. Louis schools.

Segregation is going on in the schools of Missouri today.

The real story is the segregation of our schools, and nobody seems to be reading or writing about it.

Throughout urban America — and especially St. Louis — students attend segregated schools, not necessarily under the law, but under the iron fist of socioeconomic lockdown. The total number of white graduates from all of St. Louis city schools (student population: 39,556) was less than the number of white graduates of my high school (student population: about 1,400).

Some high schools in St. Louis, like Sumner High School, are so segregated that out of 1,063 students, two were white, one was Hispanic and the rest were African-American. Again, this is old news for anyone who’s had any contact with urban schools. Sumner High, incidentally, is named for the famed abolitionist Charles Sumner, who had his head beaten in with a cane by a Southern Congressman on the floor of the U.S. Senate in 1856 for a speech he made against slavery.

I know statistics probably wasn’t your favorite class, but these numbers don’t require a lot of interpretation to understand, and they’re more important than figuring out how many red M&Ms are in a regular-sized package. I’ll tell you why.

Segregation isn’t just a vocabulary word that we

can learn about in government class and put aside, assuming that what happened to integrate schools in the mid-1950s is all that can be done. Separate but equal isn’t just a dusty phrase from the 1890s. These words have meaning today, in our schools, for our children. If you think that school segregation doesn’t matter to you, I challenge you (by you, I mean those of you in the suburbs) to move into the city without a tinge of fear that you might be mugged or have your belongings stolen.

There’s a reason you have that fear — it’s because crime is, in fact, higher in St. Louis. But there’s also a reason St. Louisians have that crime — it’s because segregation is, in fact, going on in the schools of Missouri today, as you read this. I know that a lot of you are buying into the politics of hope and change, whether it’s from Barack or Hillary or Mitt or whomever. If you really want change, don’t just sit around. Talk to your friends and family about St. Louis schools, write an e-mail to your representative and tell him or her that you want integration in your metropolitan area. Vote for people who will support equitable transportation funding to integrate schools, and if that doesn’t work, run for office.

You’re a Truman student, after all. Excellence is no accident for you, right?

Daniel Glossenger is a senior history major and MAE student from Nashville, Tenn.

AROUND THE QUAD

How have you been affected by increasing food or beer prices?



I was just in St. Louis and the beer is much cheaper there, especially good beer like Samuel Adams.”

*Nick Smegner
Junior*



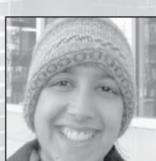
“I haven’t really been affected by beer price increases — if it’s only 60 to 80 cents a case then it won’t affect me much.”

*Patrick Barron
Freshman*



“I’m an Aldi shopper so I’m a penny-pincher, and the hit has been devastating.”

*William Erker
Sophomore*



“The price of milk has gone up, which sucks.”

*Lina Khan
Senior*

WEB POLL

How have you prepared for the upcoming presidential election?

I’ve committed to a candidate.
(31% — 16 votes)

I know which party I’m voting for, but not my candidate yet.
(27% — 14 votes)

What election?
(21% — 11 votes)

I’ve volunteered or donated to a campaign.
(21% — 11 votes)