

## Cold Snap by August Davis



## [Our View]

Down-ballot voting

The presidential elections are always intense affairs, with candidates from the Democratic and Republican parties making grand promises to the American people in an effort to gain votes. The presidential primaries already have begun, with four states — Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina — already completing part or all of their primary process, either via caucus or primary election. No matter what political party you support, you're probably aware of the platforms and promises of all the presidential candidates, from immigration reform to healthcare to human rights. You might think your preferred candidate is better than all the others because their beliefs align with yours the most and their vision for America also is your vision for America. But the president of the United States is not the absolute monarch of the United States. Any promises they make, any goals they have, and any ideals they intend to push onto the American people are subject to the checks and balances of the legislative and judicial branches of government.

We, the Index Editorial Board, understand the presidential elections are your current political

focus, and we understand why. But we also ask you to remember the importance of down-ballot elections. Down-ballot elections essentially are elections that occur on the same ballot as the presidential election but are for a lower political office such as state or federal Congress.

No matter what promises a president makes, those promises will have to go through Congress in the form of legislation. If Congress is composed of people who aren't very fond of the president, very little will get accomplished.

This essentially was the same problem the current administration faced when trying to rebuild the economy, push healthcare reform and create gun-control legislation, among other policies. Whether you agree with President Barack Obama's policies or not, you cannot deny the Republican-controlled Congress did not make it very easy for the president to push the legislation he wanted.

We understand it's easy to get caught up in the hype of the presidential elections, but we encourage all of you to research who the congressional candidates are this year in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Visit websites such as [isidewith.com](http://isidewith.com), [uselections.com](http://uselections.com), [govtrack.us](http://govtrack.us), [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org) and [fec.gov](http://fec.gov) — the Federal Election Commission's website. Don't hesitate to research who the candidates for your district are and what they stand for.

The FEC has a spreadsheet available to show exactly who is running for what office and whether they are an incumbent or challenger candidate. [Uselections.com](http://uselections.com) has a list of what state and federal offices are going to be on the ballot, and it also has links to the candidates' websites and Twitter accounts. Once you know what district you live

in — go to [govtrack.us](http://govtrack.us) and input your zip code to find out — you can focus your research. Govtrack.us focuses mainly on current members of Congress, with lists of the bills your senator or representative has sponsored, their voting history and the committees they are a part of.

While many of these websites focus on presidential and federal congressional candidates, it's also important to focus on state offices as well. This year, not only will Missourians have the chance to help choose the next president, they will be voting for a governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state treasurer and attorney general. The only statewide electoral office not on the ballot during 2016 is the state auditor, according to [uselections.com](http://uselections.com).

Politics aren't pleasant, but they affect all citizens. By not participating in the political process, you are giving up your voice. Instead of electing a president or governor and complaining when they fail to keep their campaign promises, take the time to look at the other branches of government and see how the checks and balances work, then elect the people you think will best support the presidential candidate you want. In short we encourage you to research the 2016 elections and become the informed voters we know you can be.

## Screenwriting is harder than you think



Trevor Hamblin

I have been excited for this semester since I registered entirely because of one very specific class I would be taking — screenwriting. I learned about how TV writing worked at the English senior seminar conference last spring and immediately was enamored with the idea. Taking a class on the subject, albeit focused on movies rather than TV, was a natural way to pursue this option. I knew it wasn't going to be easy, but I still was surprised how difficult screenwriting is. Writing of any kind, not just screenwriting, is more difficult than people realize. It takes time, energy, dedication and planning — a lot of planning — which is something we as consumers of media should be aware of because none of it is easy.

The vast majority of the time I've spent working for my screenwriting class has been writing and planning. At this point during the semester, I haven't even done that much actual script writing — at least not in comparison to how much energy I've put into my characters, setting and plot. This is the case with many great novels and stories. Even novels written by authors who want the story to move organically — that is, figuring the story out as they tell it — find there is some level of planning involved.

For this class, we have to spend at least 10 minutes a day working on our scripts, whether it be actually writing the script or, more likely, planning the script out so writing it actually can happen. That might not sound like much, but my to-do list for my script is still pretty long. The same can be said for any other form of writing. When you watch a TV show or movie, or when you read a book, you should know the writer put in so much time and effort, and they're only a piece of the puzzle. TV shows and movies have actors, editors, cinematographers, producers and a host of other people involved. Books require editors, agents and, on occasion, illustrators.

As a culture, we consume a lot of media meant for entertainment. There is nothing wrong with this, but we shouldn't take it for granted. People

put time and energy into what you are consuming, regardless of whether it's considered good media. Recognizing that can change your entire outlook on media. Normally with movies the director or an actor is credited for a film's success. For TV shows, the producer or, more likely, the network is given the credit. You can start to notice and then appreciate or criticize all of the contributors in a given work when you realize just how hard it is to be in any given position in this industry.

Writing is difficult in any sense, though I have only now realized this in the context of screenwriting. It's not a big leap to understand every piece of the puzzle must be hard, and no person wants their contributions taken for granted. If you understand that, you gain a better understanding of the media you consume every day, as well as an appreciation for your own work.

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