

Mandatory voting robs citizens' democratic freedoms

Voting is often regarded the same way vegetables on your dinner plate were as a child. We know that it is good for us, but we look upon it as a chore rather than an enjoyable obligation.



BY ROBERT PACHECO
STAFF WRITER

The notion that the fundamental tenet of our democracy is a burden rather than an opportunity has led to a debate over compulsory voting in America. It is an argument weighing the freedom of non-participation in the electoral process against the strength of a democracy through participation.

The vote in America is not merely an electoral process; it is a form of expression en masse. It is a town-hall meeting with 240 million of your fellow citizens arguing and bickering about who should lead. For all citizens to be heard, we must understand that those who choose not to participate are, in effect, arguing against the candidates and parties represented on the ballot.

The much-lamented decrease in voter turnout is often cited as a reason for compulsory voting. However, Dr. Michael McDonald of George Mason University has shown that, when adjusted to exclude ineligible voters, the percentage of turn-

out over the last 12 years is steadily above 50 percent.

"The 2012 turnout rate of 58.2 percent is just slightly higher than the 1992 rate of 58.1 percent," said McDonald via email interview with *The Guilfordian*. "This figure is consistent with other successful and established democracies in the world."

Presidents often claim a mandate of popular opinion to their platform lies inherent in their election. This mandate of popular opinion is a fallacy.

In the 2012 presidential election of 241 million eligible voters, approximately 127 million voters participated, with 51 percent voting for President Obama. This means that only 27 percent of the population actively supported Mr. Obama's platform. A quarter of the population does not make a mandate of collective will.

Many argue that expanding the vote expands freedom.

"Generations have marched, fought and died for the right to vote," said Erik Liu, former speechwriter and policy adviser to President Bill Clinton, through email interview with *The Guilfordian*. "Voting is more than a right, it is a responsibility."

In some nations, voting is already mandatory. Since 1924, Australia has used compulsory voting in their electoral process.

"I prefer compulsory voting to the system in America," said Chip Gracia, an American born citizen of Australia.

"It ensures the opinions of all citizens are accounted for in the electoral process."

However, that system makes voting an obligation rather than a responsibility. It is a parent telling you to eat all your veggies or you're not getting dessert.

Voting truly is a responsibility in the American democracy. Yet voting has always been a symptom of freedom and never the cause. Whether regarding our founding as a nation, the right of African-Americans and women to vote or even the Arab Spring, the vote is an effect of social movements and rarely the cause.

The belief that compulsory voting would propel freedom is a blatant lie.

Compulsory voting is un-American because it robs freedom of expression. The right to not vote must be protected as much as the right to vote because not voting is an expression of dissatisfaction with the established system of governance.

I served in the military, and I have voted in each election that I have been eligible. I believe voting sends a powerful signal to the power structure about the will of the people. But I am not foolish enough to equate voting to freedom.

I would hate to see compulsory voting used to rob the non-voter of their freedom to wave their middle finger in the air to both political parties by staying home, drinking a beer and voting on something worthwhile, like who should be the next American Idol.

This Week's

STAFF EDITORIAL

DAC efforts require your help

As our institution struggles with funds and budgets, we must ask what is most necessary and valuable, and nothing embodies these qualities like the work of the Diversity Action Committee. But the Committee needs your help.

Four years after approving the Diversity Plan, the DAC continues to strive for inclusivity and accessibility throughout campus. In efforts to involve the community with their goals, the DAC held an open forum the week after fall break to discuss progress, accomplishments and objectives. Unfortunately, only 10 people attended.

While Guilford already makes efforts to comply with codes and recruit a diverse body of students, the DAC aims to go beyond codes to make sure the institution embraces true diversity. To accomplish this, they need strength in numbers.

The committee hopes to instill a love for diversity in the student body to encourage participation in co-curricular activities that contribute to a more inclusive campus culture. They often see students become involved with organizations after their orientation experience.

In the following year, the group hopes to incorporate diversity programs into the First Year Experience program for all traditional first-year students to increase visibility throughout campus.

Additionally, the DAC and subcommittees — accessibility, recruitment and retention, curriculum, co-curriculum and budget — will continue to focus on education, awareness and resources for the cornucopia of minority identities on campus. They also plan to focus on expanding the services of the Bayard Rustin Center to support activism and education.

In the coming years, the DAC foresees becoming even more crucial to the campus community, particularly as the percentage of minority students in high school continues to rise.

The work being done needs the support of the campus to flourish. The DAC encourages students, staff and faculty to attend the meetings of any subcommittees that interest them and to become involved in embracing and facilitating diversity.

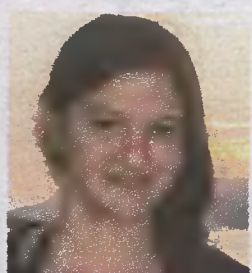
For more information on how to get involved, contact Jorge Zeballos at jzeballo@guilford.edu or Barbara Lawrence at blawrenc@guilford.edu.

REFLECTING GUILFORD COLLEGE'S CORE QUAKER VALUES, THE TOPICS AND CONTENT OF STAFF EDITORIALS ARE CHOSEN THROUGH CONSENSUS OF ALL 16 EDITORS AND ONE FACULTY ADVISER OF THE GUILFORDIAN'S EDITORIAL BOARD.

Southerners aren't like those on TV

Hey y'all, let's talk about the South, or better yet, Southerners. But ... err ... let's try to avoid being like the ones on TV.

"These guys are right out of a strait jacket," rfreed4541 on IMDb said about the Southerners on "Duck Dynasty."



BY ANNA OATES
STAFF WRITER

"The only time it's interesting is when the (Southerners) do something stupid." klondike99 said on "Swamp People."

The media has labeled us all as backwoods hicks, in case you've missed the airing of shows ranging from illegal moonshiners, hunters and some strange little girl people like to call Honey Boo Boo.

And they all hold similar themes and portrayals of Southerners.

Regardless of what shows they came from, the South has a stereotype that's more than encouraged by the media, and let's not pretend that it's a very positive one.

As a group, we're portrayed as uneducated, hyper-religious, rural, sexist, lazy and conservative.

Well, I'm not going to say I don't know Southerners who are into God, beer and guns. I'm not going to say that I'm not one myself. But I can surely say we aren't all like that and most certainly promise we all don't live off red dirt roads and have IQs lower than the temperatures up north.

So why are we all portrayed that way?

Most of these shows are reality shows, but that doesn't mean there is no acting in them. Take "Duck Dynasty" for example. These men don't come off as the sharpest crayons in the box. But how stupid can they be, if they are smart enough to not only run a successful business but also start a TV franchise worth millions of dollars?

As for clichés and stereotypes: they're close cousins, and over the years the South has built a stereotype based off a group of people, whether it be a town or that one group of guys and girls who come to school dressed in camouflage during deer season.

There will always be a group of people who fall into a stereotype, simply because those stereotypes come from elements present in the represented culture.

Shelley Burguières grew up in the small Virginia town "Duck

Dynasty" is filmed in.

"It's actually pretty accurate," Burguières told *The Guilfordian*. "Almost everyone in the town hunts, goes to church and most of the women have taken the role of housekeeper."

"But there are also some misconceptions. Not everyone looks as rough as the men in that show, with the bad beards and hygiene, and barely anyone is that stupid either."

"I think for the most part (the media) distorts, not clarifies," said Sarah Thuesen, visiting assistant professor of history. "The South got the stereotype of ignorance because the schools have always been underfunded. Some of that had to do with racial segregation issues that date back to reconstruction and civil rights."

We do have groups of people who are big into hunting and praying before each meal. We also have less money going towards schooling. But, according to VDare, the average IQ of the southern states are all ahead of places such as Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

So it's been proven statistically, just because you speak in a Southern drawl doesn't mean you are a stereotypical bearded, uneducated person.

In the well-chosen words from the movie "Sweet Home Alabama": "Honey, just because (we) talk slow doesn't mean (we're) stupid."



COURTESY OF BRIAN DOBEN/ PARADE

"Duck Dynasty" only represents certain portions Southern culture.