

The two, four, eight plan

I've been doing a lot of ruminating about how we elect our leaders this past week. Why this past week you say? Well, it's because I have recently sensed a marked rise in my anxiety level since I began to speculate that the Democrats might actually pull off a win this year. I confess that my feelings about a possible Hillary Clinton win at this point four years ago were nowhere near the apprehension level I'm experiencing now when I contemplate a Biden/Harris victory tomorrow (or whenever the final mail-in ballots are counted).

No, deep in my gut I knew then that Americans were too smart to put a scheming duplicitous woman like HRC in the White House, but a recent PBS 'American Experience: Clinton Special' that was obviously designed to rehabilitate his image and which aired this week reminded me why the Clinton dynasty had to come to a screeching halt in 2016...they had simply run out of scandals! Staying on PBS for a moment, it's no coincidence that that heavily Left-leaning media outlet would choose to put the *comeback kid* and *man from Hope* on the tube in advance of a consequential Presidential election. This was purposeful, and it revealed how much the Left yearns for the 'good old days' of Billary. Even Barack and Michelle couldn't hold a candle to that sterling tag team couple: Bill and Hill. They were America's prince and princess, dare I say the equivalent of England's Bonnie Prince Charles and his fairytale bride, 'Lady Di.'

America's love affair with the Clintons illustrates (to me at least) that we have a deeply-rooted *monarchy envy* and that many of us are addicted to celebrities and happily elevate them beyond their rightful place in our society. We project ourselves and our hopes and dreams onto our Presidents. Strange, though, that this adulation is reserved for Democrat Presidents like Roosevelt, Kennedy, Clinton and Obama. (Truman, Johnson and Carter were the notable exceptions.) I may have missed something, but I don't recall young women swooning over Nixon, Ford, and the Bushes during their time in office. But the one Republican exception to the rule might just be our current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue who seems to be whipping up a frenzy of support at his back-to-back last minute rallies in several swing states.

Latinos for Trump, Women for Trump, Blacks for Trump - all the signs are there, indicating that Republicans could be wresting a large measure of candidate excitement from the Democrats' corner. This is especially true when you do a side-by-side between Trump and Biden. One exudes energy and the other needs to call AAA and get a jump start. Candidate excitement aside, let me get back to my anxiety.

I guess one of the main reasons for my angst is the realization that my fellow countrymen could actually be stupid enough (or willing enough) to vote OUT an energetic leader with proven managerial skills and vote IN a placeholder octogenarian President who will be lucky to last a year on the job before being replaced by a prosecutorial piranha whose thirst for power can only be matched by her phony-baloney omnipresent grin. I worry that the clock is rapidly counting down on the last remaining minutes of the common sense political demolition derby, and my fear is that Americans will choose the car that's running out of gas instead of the one with plenty of get up and go. If that happens, I'm afraid that we'll all become road-kill.

What are some possible solutions?

As I said, I've given this a lot of thought. Basically, I think we ought to change the way we elect our Presidents if for no other reason than to avoid these every four-year car wrecks. I call it the 2, 4, 8 plan and it would go something like this...

Starting in 2024, we would institute a two-year election for the next President. After he or she (I'm using 'he' for both he and she) serves 18 months, we would ask for a nationwide vote of confidence which is a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down on how well he has performed.

The time frame for registering this performance appraisal is one week. If his numbers are positive he stays on for another two years without an election. If they're negative, we hold another election. Each party will be required to nominate its candidates within a month and will then have five weeks of campaigning before the vote is taken. At the end of the four-year term, we hold another 'normal' election, but this one will be an abbreviated one, allowing for only three months of campaigning during which time each candidate must visit each and every state at least once.

I have other ideas to improve the election process that are more radical like requiring that all candidates not be older than 60 at the time of their inauguration and that we limit the number of times candidates are allowed to say 'folks' or 'here's the deal' when making stump speeches AND that teleprompters may not be used when making those speeches, but the 2, 4, 8 plan could be a good start and go a long way towards lowering the nation's collective blood pressure...and save us carloads of money in the process. Thanks. I'm feeling much better now that I got that out of my system.

Stephan Helgesen is a retired career U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in 30 countries for 25 years during the Reagan, G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush Administrations. He is the author of ten books, four of which are on American politics and has written over 1,000 articles on politics, economics and social trends. He can be reached at: stephan@stephanhelgesen.com