

The strong two party system is the bane of America's current problems. It seems that there is way too much loyalty to one's party. If you are a Democrat, everything that the Democrats propose is great and everything the Republicans propose is stupid and destructive. If you are a Republican, everything the Republican's propose is great and everything the Democrats advocate is stupid and destructive. Whatever happened to people thinking through proposed legislation or judging candidates based on the merits of the proposals or the character and experience of the candidates? I am a registered Democrat, but I am also a conservative. I despise most of the progressive proposals coming out of the Democratic party. I find that I align better with the more conservative bent of the Republican party, and I have seriously considered changing my party affiliation. However, I find that being aligned the way that I am tends to cause me to pay more attention to the merits and problems with proposed legislation or the candidates. If I believe proposed legislation is flawed, I do not feel compelled to support it just because I am registered with the party that proposed it. Or, if I believe a given candidate is unworthy, I will not vote for that person regardless of his or her party affiliation. I certainly do not believe that everything coming out of either party is good, nor is everything coming out of either party bad. Isn't this the way it is supposed to be?

We have a Presidential election coming up in 2016. At present, the Democrats have (I believe) five candidates – Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Lincoln Chafee, Martin O'Malley, and Jim Webb. In addition, there are rumblings that Joe Biden may run. I do not know much about Martin O'Malley or Lincoln Chafee, but I have yet to see any reason why I would vote for any of these. The presumed winner – Hillary Clinton – has so many negatives in my mind that I could not support her if she is my party's candidate. I wish somebody would tell me what she has ever done that would suggest she would be a good President. I am sorry, but being the wife of a previous President does NOT qualify a person for being President.

I have serious concerns about her character and I don't believe that she distinguished herself as Secretary of State. I believe that a reasonable criterion for evaluating a person's performance as Secretary of State is to ask how many countries does the United States have better relationships with today than we had prior to that person's tenure? In the case of Hillary Clinton, I can't think of any. Think about it – Russia?, Egypt?, Iraq?, Germany?, Mexico?, France?, Israel?, China?, Afghanistan?, Syria?, Turkey?, ... – give me some names. The Benghazi episode is just one of many problems that I associate with her tenure as SOS. Also, her email scandal gives me serious concerns about her honesty and character. And, if the accusations about her mishandling of classified information are true, she certainly is not worthy of being the President of the United States. Furthermore, the way the Clinton Foundation has been operated and used to support the Clintons as much or more than it has been used to support legitimate causes gives me concern about her judgment. I don't think there is any way I could vote for her. Of course, my final decision will depend on who the Republican nominee is. Right now, unless the Republicans nominate Donald Trump, it seems likely that I will cross party lines yet again and vote for the Republican candidate. Based on what I have seen and on my own conservative leanings, it seems to me there are at least a half dozen Republican candidates that I believe to be better than any of the current Democratic candidates.

One last comment. Just as I feel that one should NOT vote for a candidate just because of the party that the person represents, I also do NOT believe that one should vote for a person because of that person's sex or race. I hear from a lot of people that they are going to vote for a candidate because that person is a woman and it is time for a woman to be President. Or, they are going to vote for a candidate because that person is black. Neither sex nor race matters to me. I have no problem voting for a woman if she is qualified. Nor do I have a problem voting for a black if the person is qualified. In fact, two of my current favorites are Carly Fiorina and Ben Carson.

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