

NEWSLETTER

WebParentTip, Volume 9 # 3 for 3-5-08

POLITICS

Parents, don't miss the opportunity to involve your children in politics this year!

Seems strange to be writing about parenting and politics at this time of year but this is an unusual year of early primaries. We parents have a great opportunity to talk to our children about democracy in action. The voters on both sides of the aisle are energized, everybody is talking about how the race for our next president is shaping up, many of us are working very hard for our candidate.

I try not to be partisan on ParentKidsRight.com not because I am too cowardly to tell you which party or candidate I support but because I want to be useful to all parents and I don't want to lose my "base" by alienating those of you who don't agree with me.

But it is apparent to me that one of the main reasons we see this welling up of political energy is because so many of us are dissatisfied when we take the pulse of our country. The United States of America is a great country. The experiment of our Founding Fathers worked and all of us living in freedom benefit from their foresight every day.

But almost everyone of us is troubled by the continuing war, the economy including the enormous debt and lack of jobs for the vanishing middle class, the millions who are uninsured or under-insured for health care, the schools that are failing to educate our children to compete in a global economy, the environment, lack of a sound energy policy, eroding world opinion, nibbling away at the Constitution—I could go on and on. No matter what your politics or which candidate you plan to vote for, everyone of you will agree that at least some of the concerns I listed are yours as well.

Let me share my own metaphor. I feel as though my country which I deeply love has been hijacked and is going in the wrong direction. I feel as though I am on a giant 747 with all my fellow Americans and everybody wants to get back on course. We need a pilot who knows how to navigate and knows what the instruments in the very complicated cockpit of this metaphorical plane are for and how to use them.

How did I decide on my candidate? I used a very low tech method: a pad of yellow paper. My first column listed the problems our country is having, the second column listed the characteristics, attributes, and experiences that our next president needs to do the job. I then did my research and looked at EVERY candidate in BOTH parties before I made my choice. I didn't just listen to the pundits, pollsters, and predictors on the news channels or professors at the university. I didn't just talk to people in my party, I talked to lots of people about what they thought. I did a lot of reading both in newspapers and on candidate websites. Although the sociologists tell us we make our decisions about who to vote for using the emotional part of our brain, I tried to use all of my brain especially the thinking parts. It took me three months to make up my mind.

My children are grown but how much fun it would have been to tell them about my personal "Decision 2008" as I went along.

How can you involve your children? Talk about how YOU are making up your mind. Take them with you to vote in the primary or canvas for your candidate, let them help put up signs, record educational snippets of TV news programs or debates to illustrate a good vs bad argument or rebuttal. Help them figure out the difference between a sound bite and a solid plan to fix things in our country so we once more become a country of the people, by the people, and for the people. Allow and encourage passionate political arguments at home.

Above all, let your children see your passion. Patriotism can be defined as the passion to use your brains to determine how you will vote in a very complex country at a very difficult moment in the history of the world. Bring the kids along on this important journey with you.

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Marilyn Heins, MD