

Why the Media Needs to Back Off Donald Trump Presidential Move

On Tuesday, Donald Trump became the 24th announced candidate for president of the United States. He has since been lampooned on late-night talk shows, Twitter, and across the blogosphere.

The Daily Beast's P. J. O'Rourke was particularly caustic, asking of the declared candidates, "Do they take us voters for fools? Of course. But are they also deluded? Are they also insane? Are they under the illusion that they have the qualities to make a good or even adequate president? Do they imagine they possess even one such quality?" Later he asked, "Has the office of the presidency diminished in stature until it attracts only the midgets of public life?"

Unlike O'Rourke and other pundits, my purpose today is not to criticize Mr. Trump or any of the other candidates. Rather, it is to thank them for running.

The American democratic experiment requires that citizens be willing to campaign for and serve in public office. It has never been as expensive and difficult to run for president as it is today. Karl Rove recently estimated that running in the February 2016 primaries will cost \$20 million. Running in the March primaries will cost another \$20 to \$30 million.

A candidate must raise an enormous amount of money, dedicate years to the process, and endure the constant criticism of competitors and citizens. Those who run for other offices face similar challenges. By one calculation, there are currently 519,682 positions in America for which we need citizens to seek election. If the current tide of skepticism and cynicism continues to escalate, it will be even harder to find

qualified candidates. Therefore, this issue affects the very future of our democracy.

Robert Hutchins was dean of Yale Law School and then president and chancellor of the University of Chicago. He warned, "The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment." Abraham Lincoln was more optimistic, claiming that "the ballot is stronger than the bullet." The survival of our democracy after his assassination proved his point.

If any two people had reason to slander their governmental leaders, it was Peter and Paul. Peter was repeatedly imprisoned, at one point scheduled for execution, and eventually crucified upside down. Paul was repeatedly imprisoned and eventually beheaded. Yet Peter counseled us to "honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:17). And Paul wrote, "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and pleasing in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

As Christians, let's resolve not to slander those who seek and occupy political office. (Tweet this) Rather, pray for them that they would live and lead biblically. Pray that their leadership would advance the common good and the kingdom of God. If "every country has the government it deserves" (Joseph de Maistre), pray that we would be a people deserving of the best.

Daniel Webster believed, "Whatever makes men good Christians, makes them good citizens." Let us prove him right.

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