

The Enemy Within | Allan Besselink

Written by Allan Besselink

Thursday, 23 October 2008 16:04

In the name of the founding fathers - let the damn people vote!

Over the past two elections, we've been exposed to some questionable voting practices. We've seen hanging chads and problems with electronic voting stations. In the past few DAYS of early voting, we've already been exposed to what I would call "extremists" that are trying to influence the voting process by giving people bad information. In Austin, there have been reports of people instructing others in improper voting practices so that they effectively spoil their vote. And that is but one example that we have seen locally, let alone nationally. This type of thing has the potential to make a shambles of our voting system.

And therein lies one of the greatest threats to this great country in which we live - it's the enemy within.

Everyone is worried about all the external forces that impact our country. It could be the "axis of evil" or any number of extremists or religious jihads that instill fear in our populace. This fear is constantly being employed by the media (and politicians, to varying degrees) to help to manipulate the population along the lines of their (perhaps hidden) agendas.

But if you step back and look within, you'll see plenty of extremists in our own backyard. Perhaps first and foremost are those that are trying to screw around with the voting process. You have the right to vote, you have the right to freedom of speech, you have the right to freedom of religion, and yet there are still those out there that want to limit these rights if they are counter to their own beliefs. That to me is absolutely un-American and unconstitutional - and a great threat to our freedom. The enemy within.

We're told we need to be concerned about Iran ... and Iraq ... and North Korea ... and Russia ... and countless other dictators that can rattle a saber or two. But strangely enough, we don't have to go to a foreign country or group of religious fanatics to find none other than Timothy McVeigh. Prior to 9/11, he committed the single largest terrorist attack within the U.S. - a U.S. Army veteran who killed 168 people in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. Yes, he was one of our own. Yes, the enemy within - again.

Living in democratic freedom is a tenuous activity. Freedom of speech provides everyone with a voice - extremist or otherwise - under the law. Freedom of religion provides everyone with their own religion - extremist or otherwise - under the law. But keeping all of these things in balance is a true challenge and perhaps one of the greatest feats of democracy.

Yes, we need to be cognizant of threats from afar. But with our rights come responsibilities. And it is our responsibility to look at the enemy within us, perhaps before being so worried about the enemy outside of us. If we don't protect our freedoms from within, then how do we protect it from afar?

◆