The Influence of Continuing Education in the U.S. Presidential Election

Unless you do not live in the United States or have lived there but under a rock, you know that this is a presidential election year. Every 4 years, the American public is exposed to some number of individuals who are seeking the highest elected office. Whole professions are dedicated to polling, managing campaigns, offering opinions, writing articles and editorials, doing commentary, and so forth. As I thought about this, I wondered if we could not run a small country on the amount of money expended in all of these efforts! And yet, only a small handful of the citizenry determines the outcome of who will serve as the next President.

You may be asking yourself, how does this relate to continuing education in nursing? Here are some wild thoughts!

When we review statistics about the voting public (I mean the number of people who actually vote, not what party or what voting segmentations each person might represent), we know we are remiss as a country in exercising this fundamental right. One of the first things we can do in our role of service to the organization is bring awareness to the need to be registered to vote and how to become a registered voter if one is not already. Next, we could use the information most professional organizations (or the League of Women Voters) provide regarding candidates to share with our colleagues so they know about positions and backgrounds of key candidates. And then we could provide a refresher course on how ideas become laws. However, instead of using the models that show how a bill is introduced and moves through a committee to the whole group (House or Senate) and then to the other group, we could educate people about the influence of political action committees, lobbyists, and individual donations. While the former is the official structured process, it does not tell us why some good ideas are held in a committee or why something totally unrelated to a bill is tacked on. It also does not tell us of the nuances of how something is worded and who introduces the idea and the influence of those elements on the potential passage of an idea.

No matter which candidate anyone supports in any election, nurses must act as citizens and ensure their views are heard—through the voting process. We are great at responding to being attacked. Remember the issue of *The View* and Miss Colorado? As you may recall, the hosts of *The View* commented negatively about the talent Miss Colorado displayed during the Miss America contest (American Nurses Association, 2015). She arrived in scrubs and a stethoscope and told about being a nurse. Nurses across the country and the world responded strongly about this denigration of the role of being a nurse. We responded with such force that *The View* made a public apology for demeaning the talent Miss Colorado presented. Some sponsors withdrew their contracts for advertising.

Imagine the influence we could have by helping all citizens value the privilege of voting? Our opportunity is to start with us and make sure we are aware of the candidates, their views, and the real political process and then to actually put that knowledge to work by voting. Here is my motto: If you do not vote (assuming you can), you do not get to complain! I fully intend to be sure to exercise my right to complain!

REFERENCE

Patricia S. Yoder-Wise, RN, EdD, NEA-BC, ANEF, FAAN
Editor-in-Chief
psywrn@aol.com

The author has disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.
doi:10.3928/00220124-20160616-01