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Tazewell County Board

Continuing a Family Tradition of Community Service

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October ASO Magazine Column **Dangers of Political Parties**

Most politicians are honest folks; those who are dishonest are the exception. But unfortunately sometimes they get the visibility. And again we need to make sure that people recognize those that are doing a good job and also help them to do a good job.

Jim Edgar, September 2010

Its election season again. It's time to choice which side you are on. You have to support the Republicans or the Democrats, the conservatives or the liberals, one side or the other of the political organizations. At least that is what the both sides want you to believe.

The truth is that, like most things in life, it is not that simple.

Both sides are blurred by individuals that use the political organizations to hide their true backgrounds and beliefs. They align themselves to the group they think will win and hope no-one will question them.

After they are elected, if individuals start to question these now elected officials' actions, the organizations would rather pressure to them to stay quite than have fellow party members questioning them. Both political parties would rather keep an elected office even if the individual is not the right choice rather than take the chance of losing one with an internal fight amongst members.

In his Farewell Address to the nation, then President George Washington spoke of the dangers of Political Parties. While Washington accepted the fact that it is natural for people to organize and operate within groups like political parties, he also argued that every government has recognized political parties as an enemy and has sought to repress them because of their tendency to seek more power than other groups and take revenge on political opponents. He argues that these parties' efforts to seize power and exact revenge upon their opponents have led to horrible atrocities and will ultimately end in despotism as people throw their support behind the most powerful faction and the faction focuses on increasing their own power instead of promoting the public liberty.

Over the course of my political career, I have been pressured a few times to not ask questions of certain elected officials because they were up for election. The argument I have been given is that questioning of these individuals only give potential ammunition to their political opponents. They argue that if I want to ask these questions, I should wait a few months until after the election.

This is just what Washington was talking about. As an elected official, nothing should stop me from asking questions needed to complete the work I was elected to do. Seems clear cut, but the pressure comes because if you anger some of these party officials they can make it hard for you next time you are up for election. So what it comes down to for me is a simple choice; do I do the work I was elected by the people to do or do I want to have a difficult election in the future.

For those of you that know me, you know the answer to the question. I have always had and always will have full confidence in the voting public. I have always and will always run campaigns based on what I have accomplished and what I wish to accomplish. When campaigns are run this way, voters are simply presented with a decision based more on facts and less on rumor mill and gossip.

I have had the opportunity to support “the wrong candidate” before; Dan Rutherford when he ran for the Illinois Senate in 2002. As a Tazewell County Elected Official, I was told that my future political career was ruined because I was supporting Dan Rutherford over a local Tazewell County Resident. I simple reviewed their positions and felt that Dan Rutherford was the better pick. How did it turn out; Rutherford won big and has now risen to the level to be a serious candidate for Illinois State Treasurer and a leader in the Statewide Republican Party. As for me, in my next election I was top of the ballot.

As far as this situation, I will continue to ask the questions that need to be answered and press that the answers be given, regardless of whom they are directed at. It comes down to who put me in office, the party or the voters. I am happy to report the voters did and I will place my future in their hands.

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