

RUN, CHARLIE, RUN!

Independent Candidates Bring American Voters Back to Basics.

by Vic Berecz

“Run, Charlie, Run!” That was the cry this evening in St. Petersburg as our Governor, Charlie Crist, announced his decision to run for the U.S. Senate as an unaffiliated candidate. Basically, his was not a decision to leave the Republican Party ... rather it was recognition of the fact that Florida’s Republican Party had left him and all moderates in their mad-dash toward “conservative” extremism. Among Crist’s comments at the announcement were: “Unfortunately, our political system is broken.” and “People have a right to choose ... it’s not one club’s decision.”



The latter is of particular importance. Every poll says that even here in Florida moderation has a significant number of adherents. But, the only way it seems that a moderate can get on the ballot is to run without party affiliation. Fortunately, this year we have a person with the guts to run that way, and the credibility and experience to win. Yes, it’s back to basics. We will have a real choice ... not just choosing between the lesser of two evils. Wouldn’t it be great if other elections also presented more than two viable choices?

Crist’s situation is not unique. A few years ago Joe Lieberman was in an analogous position. He was abandoned by the Connecticut Democratic Party in their move toward “liberal” extremism. As an independent candidate, he won his Senate seat and continues to be a significant voice for moderation in Washington. But, in Connecticut, over 50% of the electorate is unaffiliated. Unfortunately, Charlie Crist doesn’t have that advantage. In Florida, only about 20% are unaffiliated. But, he does have the advantage of being an extremely personable man who virtually everyone agrees has done a fine job as Governor. His record of achievement makes him a viable candidate.

A few weeks ago, I wrote: “In the state where I vote, Florida, primaries are closed ... i.e. only party members can vote. I think that’s as it should be, even though it leaves me out of the nomination process.” My friend *Sten from Maine* responded “My grandparents once explained to me that we each bear a personal responsibility for staying educated about the public issues and being an independent voter who looks for the candidates who offer the best solutions, regardless of party affiliation. And being a registered *non-affiliated* voter provides the best of all worlds, but only if local laws allow independents to participate in the primaries of the organized parties. However, in most states and local communities, to vote in a primary, you must be registered with the party in question. My grandparents also explained that the laws that most effect you are local laws. If you live in a community where one party dominates, you should register to vote with that party affiliation, since, in most instances, the choice of candidate ends with the local primary.” *Sten* makes a very good point. I may change my mind and work for open primaries in the future, so long as they don’t allow members of one party to hi-jack the other party. Nevertheless, here in Florida **Charlie Crist today ensured that the choice doesn’t end at the primary ...**

... that’s good for all of us!