

3 Ways to Make the Post-Election World Better

I scanned my sample ballot. The options were less than inspiring. “Surely,” I thought, “there is a better way than this.”

Fortunately, there is. Voting isn’t the only way to effect social change—indeed, it isn’t necessarily a very good one given what we know about voter irrationality and the like. Here are three complements to the ballot that will, I suspect, be more effective in the long run.

Occupy K Street—or your state or local equivalent. K Street in Washington, DC is where policies and votes are bought and sold. Maybe you can’t get to DC, but you can get to your state’s licensing board meetings. Or your City Council or County Commission meetings. On what grounds do they prevent people from doing their jobs? How are they to know the tradeoffs people should make? There might be reasons based on incomplete or asymmetric information for governments to get involved in quality certification and risk assessment, but they don’t need to be prohibiting people from doing their work. Let Rocky Balboa’s speech after his boxing license was denied be your muse.

This is one of the many forms of democratic participation that don’t involve casting a ballot. Make your voice heard. Literally.

Listen to people with whom you disagree. *Really* listen, and think it possible that they came to their seemingly-crazy views for non-crazy reasons. You might learn something. Importantly, listen to the smartest and most thoughtful people you can find. I too get a chuckle or gasp in horror at the absurd things TV talking heads say, but what you see on Jimmy

Kimmel or Fox News isn't the best representation of the underlying ideas. What are the leading journals of opinion with which you are inclined to disagree? Read more of those. If you want to know what's reliable, [the Media Bias Chart is a good place to start](#). It's an imperfect representation of the political spectrum—readers of *Reason*, for example, are probably to the left of the Democratic party on sex, drugs, and immigration—but it's a good place to start. Move inward and upward away from the red and orange rectangles and toward the yellow and green rectangles. This will help you avoid being the kind of citizen the philosopher Jason Brennan calls a “[hooligan](#)” and become more of the citizen he would call a Vulcan.

Another good way to move in this direction is to look at how you curate your social media feeds. Ask yourself: which scholars and commentators representing diverse viewpoints can you follow on Twitter or like on Facebook?

Travel. The US is a huge place. So too is your home state, most likely. Visit those large, mostly-empty places that have as many senators as New York and California even though they have a small fraction of the population. Think it possible that there might be good reasons for such an arrangement. Visit New York or Boston or San Francisco, and see more than just the touristy places. Take Greyhound or Amtrak. Or if long-distance travel is off the menu, take small steps. Eat at Cracker Barrel or shop at Whole Foods non-ironically. Be around people who aren't like you, because they all bear the image of God. Then you can retreat to your [bubble](#), if you wish—but you will return wiser for it.

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