

Sam Adams Speaks to Voter ID and Other Election Day Matters

It's time to head to the polls where the lines will be likely be long, but the election day will be short, to paraphrase a common saying!

Our minds, as we stand in line, will likely drift to various poll numbers, final campaign speeches from the candidates, or daydreams of what life will be like if our candidates win or lose. But instead of fixating on these things for the millionth time in the last several months, why not ponder some voting and election advice from Samuel Adams?

Four pieces of advice stand out from a quick perusal of [one of his many volumes of writings](#):

Vote Your Conscience

Voter enthusiasm seems high among some individuals, but for others, this election leaves many unhappy with the offered candidates. Which candidates should be selected? How should voters choose?

Adams would agree with the dictum someone recently gave to me: vote your conscience. Adams endorses wise "deliberation and caution" when casting a vote. Having done so, voters "may then reflect, each one on his own integrity, and appeal to the Monitor within his breast, that he has not trifled with the sacred trust reposed in him by God and his country...."

Don't Sell Your Vote

Some take the privilege of voting for granted and may be tempted to vote in accord with the wishes of the highest bidder. Yet Adams cautions against voting to please friends or advance one's own interests. The man who stoops to such lows,

Adams implies, has “prostituted his honor and conscience.”

Support Voter ID

Requiring individuals to show identification at the voting booth is considered by many to be a travesty of justice and a suppression of voting rights. Sam Adams would not agree. He argues that showing identification provides “further security to the people in the free exercise of this invaluable right.” Cheating is more likely to occur, he infers, in highly populated areas which have large numbers of immigrants. Adams welcomes these newcomers, but suggests “that such foreigners should be required when they offer their votes to the Selectmen of the towns, to produce authentic certificates from the Courts, by which they were endowed with so high a privilege, as a test of their citizenship.”

Accept Responsibility

Finally, Adams suggests that voting is a great responsibility of American citizens. As such, it shouldn’t be done flippantly or carelessly, but with careful thought, accepting the weight of our responsibility, and knowing that we will be held accountable for the leaders we choose:

Let each Citizen remember, at the Moment he is offering his Vote, that he is not making a Present or a Compliment to please an Individual, or at least that he ought not so to do; but that he is executing one of the most solemn Trusts in human Society, for which he is accountable to God and his Country.

Amen, Mr. Adams!

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