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Presidential Candidates Are Ignoring Unmarried Voters

A recent national poll asked American voters which candidate – Al Gore or George W. Bush – best understood the problems of single people.

The results show a sharply divided public, with 39 percent saying Gore and 27 percent saying Bush, and another 34 percent unsure. The Reuters-Zogby poll of 1,004 likely voters was conducted on the weekend of August 19 by pollster John Zogby.

No wonder the responses were all over the board. Neither Gore nor Bush have reached out to unmarried voters in any identifiable way, nor have they even uttered the words “single people” in a public forum.

As for other candidates, such as Ralph Nader (Greens), John Hagelin (Natural Law), Pat Buchanan (Reform), and Harry Browne (Libertarian), none of them have spoken to or about single people either.

Nader has never been married. He could easily tell unmarried voters that he sympathizes with our issues and concerns. But he has said nothing to us.

Hagelin is divorced. Although the Natural Law Party and his faction of the Reform Party are silent on the issue of marital status discrimination, Hagelin has shown some support by personally joining the American Association for Single People.

But despite the virtual silence by the candidates, something seems to be brewing as the presidential race moves into full swing after the Labor Day holiday. The media is beginning to take notice of the growing number of single adults in America and their growing political and economic clout.

Time Magazine stirred the pot with its cover

story on the emergence of millions of middle-aged women who are not jumping at the chance to get married. Following that was a story in the New York Times focusing on the way in which single voters are being ignored by politicians. (See story on page 6.)

Fanning the flames was a commentary in the National Review on August 31 in which the writer says that Gore went overboard in his acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention by “invoking the phrase ‘working families’ like a Buddhist chant.”

Deroy Murdock, a columnist with the Scripps Howard News Service added: “Most important, Gore’s rhetoric discounts voters like me. I’m single and have no kids. And I’m not alone. According to the Census Bureau, 46.6 million American adults never have been married.” Not to mention 33 million more unmarried adults who are divorced or widowed.

Murdock recently wrote to the American Association for Single People, stating: “I support your cause. If people get married, fine. But for those of us who are not or will not be married, it would be nice if politicians would stop treating us like criminals or freaks. And if they insist on doing that, they at least should be decent enough to stop taking our money.”

While single people may not be standing at their windows and shouting “I’m madder than hell and I’m not going to take it anymore,” there is discontent in the wind. AASP’s ad campaign (see pp. 4-5 inside) will let unmarried Americans know there is an organization they can join – one that will provide a collective voice for them so their concerns are heard by elected officials and corporate executives.

www.singlesRights.org

Singles Rights Lobby is a nonprofit association lobbying for unmarried workers, consumers, taxpayers, and voters

Lloyd E. Rigler
Founder

Democratic Party and Gore Do Outreach to All But Single People



Al Gore is the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party. He is married.

In his acceptance speech at the party's national convention, Gore invoked the term "family" some 50 times. He never once mentioned single or unmarried people.

The national platform of the Democratic Party opposes discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, age, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. Marital status is conspicuously absent.

The party platform speaks to many specific sub-groups of Americans. Here are the constituencies and the number of times they are mentioned in that document: families (88), workers (79), children (61), parents (28), women (9), disabled (9), immigrants (8), seniors (5), gays and lesbians (2). Also included are veterans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans. Single people are not mentioned.

The party has positions papers on each racial and ethnic minority, on disability, and on gays and lesbians. It has outreach programs for all of these groups, plus one for seniors and one for women. No paper on marital status discrimination. No outreach program for single people.

The National Review recently ran a commentary: "Gore's Unfair to Single People: he claims to love 'working families' – but leaves out the unmarried."

Many more unmarried adults vote for Democratic candidates than they do for Republican candidates. Taking this constituency for granted, and ignoring the issue of marital status discrimination, may eventually backfire on Gore and the Democratic Party.

Marital Status of Democrats	
Married 56%	Unmarried 44%

Republican Party and Bush Keep Focus on Traditional Families



George W. Bush is the presidential candidate of the Republican Party. He is married.

In his acceptance speech at the party's national convention, Bush used the term "family" only six times. He did not mention single or unmarried people in his remarks.

According to its national platform, the Republican Party opposes "discrimination based on sex, race, age, religion, creed, disability, or national origin." Neither marital status nor sexual orientation is included.

The platform speaks about helping families and married couples. It does not mention single people. By promoting "abstinence until marriage" sex education, the platform assumes either that all adults will marry or that unmarried adults will not have intimate relationships.

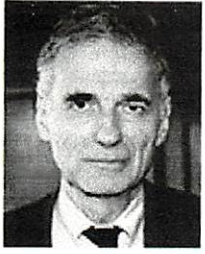
The platform says that the party supports "the courageous efforts of single-parent families to have a stable home" while at the same time stressing the need to reduce the number of unmarried parents and to increase the rate of marriage.

One plank calls for a "family-friendly" tax code – not one that is neutral when it comes to marital status. The same section adds: "We support the traditional definition of 'marriage' as the legal union of one man and one woman, and we believe that federal judges and bureaucrats should not force states to recognize other living arrangements as marriages."

With the presidential race getting too close to call, Bush might attract more unmarried voters if he were to speak directly to single people, stressing, for example, how his stand on death tax repeal and partial privatization of social security could benefit them.

Marital Status of Republicans	
Married 66%	Unmarried 34%

Greens



Ralph Nader is the presidential candidate nominated by the Green Party. Nader is single.

Despite his marital status and his reputation as someone who fights for the underdog, Nader has not done any specific outreach to single and unmarried voters.

The Green Party website, including its platform, is silent on the subject of marital status discrimination.

AASP has written to Nader on several occasions, through Public Citizen as well as through the Green Party.

Nader has not responded to any of AASP's letters.

Natural Law



John Hagelin is the presidential candidate of the Natural Law Party. He is divorced.

The Natural Law Party is silent about the rights of single people. Hagelin, however, has shown some support for our cause by joining

AASP as an honorary member.

Reform



Pat Buchanan claims to be the nominee of the Reform Party, although that is disputed by Hagelin who also claims to be the nominee.

Buchanan's record is clear that he would not want the law to prohibit marital status discrimination.

Libertarian



Harry Browne is the presidential candidate nominated by the Libertarian Party. He is married.

As a Libertarian, Browne opposes government intervention and regulation of private businesses. As a result, he would oppose laws prohibiting marital status discrimination by private businesses against

employees and consumers.

Browne says that government workers should have the right to choose another person to add to their benefits plan at work.

He adds: "What I would prefer to see is the state not providing any legal benefits or detriments to people based on marital status. It should have nothing whatsoever to do with marriage."

Are you one of the
80 million single or unmarried adults
ignored by George W. Bush and Al Gore
at the recent political conventions?

Are you one of the following?

**single adult • divorcee • widow or widower • domestic partner
single retiree • single college student • unmarried family**

How many ways are we discriminated against?

 in the workplace

 in the marketplace

 in our tax laws

Let us count some of them for you:

Unmarried employees

- are taken for granted by employers
- receive fewer benefits, and therefore less in pay, than married workers
- usually lack legal protections against marital status discrimination

Unmarried consumers

- often pay more for insurance
- face credit discrimination
- may be rejected by landlords
- are denied “family” discounts for our roommates or partners

Unmarried taxpayers

- get less in social security benefits
- often pay higher income tax
- pay tax on domestic partner benefits
- often pay an unfair death tax – double taxation – which can take up to 60% of our estates; spousal transfers are tax free

- ✓ *Are we not as important as married people?* – We think so!
- ✓ *Don't we pay our fair share of taxes?* – We know that we do!
- ✓ *Aren't we part of the electorate?* **Yes, 34% of voters in the last national election!**

If you want a voice in our society . . .

If you want political parties to pay attention to our concerns . . .

If you want elected officials to listen to us when we speak . . .

If you want corporate executives and unions to treat us fairly . . .

Then you should join the . . .

American Association for Single People

a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization for solo singles, domestic partners, single parents, and other unmarried adults

We are a nonprofit and non-partisan association advocating for the human rights and well being of solo singles, domestic partners, single parents, and other unmarried adults. *You don't have to be on the Internet to participate. As a member you will receive newsletters in the mail to keep you posted on our progress as we fight for your rights.*

Membership is open to any adult who makes a tax-deductible donation of \$10 or more. Elected officials, political activists, and unmarried citizens in some 39 states have already joined us. What about you? And ask your unmarried friends, neighbors, co-workers and family members too join too.

Clip the coupon to the right →

Yes, you can count me in.

Here is my tax-deductible donation for:

[] \$10 [] \$25 [] \$50 [] _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

e-mail _____

Make check payable to American Association for Single People and mail with the coupon to
P.O. Box 65756 • Los Angeles, CA 90065 • (888) 295-1679
and please visit our website on the Internet at

www.UnmarriedAmerica.com
the nation's voice for unmarried workers, consumers, taxpayers and voters

Unmarried Voters Not Yet on the Political Radar Screen

A story published in the New York Times focuses on the problem of presidential candidates ignoring unmarried voters as they send constant messages to the public about families and parents. (K.A. Dilday, "O, To be Single and Have a Politician Pay Attention," August 27, 2000.) Here is the story. AASP is mentioned.

The family values platform has been the stomping ground of Republicans for so long that there has been little room for the Democrats. But last week, riding a wave of strong polls following his family-friendly speech at the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, Vice President Al Gore reiterated his intention to make families, particularly "working families," the focus of his campaign. Mr. Gore projected himself as a devoted husband and father who understands that all families want the same opportunities for their children.

But where does all the talk about parents leave unmarried, childless voters, a group that has supported the Democratic Party by a strong majority in recent years? The risk is that such appeals will keep this block at home, including single women, a group that has been growing since 1970.

According to polls by the Voter News Service, a consortium of television networks and The Associated Press, single adults made up 34 percent of voters in 1996. These voters have supported the Democratic candidate for president in significantly larger percentages than married voters have in every presidential election since 1980.

Both political parties have directed appeals particularly to mothers by stressing certain issues like education, gun control and health care. But they have virtually ignored unmarried women. The percentage of women between the ages of 20 and 24 who had never married doubled from 35.8 percent in 1970 to 70.3 percent in 1997. During that same period, the percentage of never-married women increased nearly fourfold in the 25-to-29 age group.

Time just proclaimed that single women have moved to the center of national social and cultural life from a position of obscurity. Yet in the political landscape they are still invisible.

Mr. Gore chose his oldest daughter, Karenna Gore Schiff, to nominate him for president at the convention.

He sent a message: his role as a father is one of the most important criteria that qualify him for president. Although Ms. Schiff has been an adviser to her father, she became a more visible member of his campaign only after she married and became a mother. In his convention speech Mr. Gore invoked family no fewer than 50 times. On the other hand, Mr. Bush, the Republican candidate, used it only six times.

When Mr. Gore announced his candidacy in June 1999, he used family 25 times. Delivering the commencement speech at Harvard University in 1994, he said: "I

believe in finding fulfillment in family, for the family is the true center of a meaningful life. Cynics may say: All families are confining and ultimately dysfunctional; the very idea of family is outdated and unworkable. But the cynics are wrong. It is in our families that we learn to love."

But with the single lifestyle becoming increasingly popular, particularly among women, Mr. Gore's family focus may alienate those who are trying to take pride in what has been seen as a less than ideal choice in a society that values marriage and childbearing highly.

Mr. Gore's national spokesman, Doug Hattaway, said many of the issues Mr. Gore addresses, like prescription benefits, appeal to all people, including those "who are not yet parents." Implicit is perhaps the assumption that the childless and single will one day become parents, that they are responsive to a message that focuses on families.

In fact, that is often true. Still not everyone is destined for parenthood. "In every society there are people who never marry and live a contented life," said David Popenoe of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University.

Why do politicians often ignore this huge group of voters? This rather large and amorphous body does not define itself as a group; the voters in it are also often folded into other target demographic categories, including younger voters, ethnic groups, divorced people, widowers and those older adults who have never married.

"A lot of the groups we look at are groups that we've heard campaigns are targeting," said Jeffrey M. Jones, managing editor of the Gallup Poll. "Single voters are a group that's never really been talked about."

☞ It is difficult to obtain data on unmarried voters, probably because they have not yet emerged as a lobby, although the lobbying branch of the American Association for Single People, a California-based organization that promotes the rights of unmarried people, is planning a national advertising campaign directed at unmarried voters who feel underserved by the political process.

Thomas F. Coleman, executive director of the association, says that he has been struggling for decades to secure equal rights for single people and to enlist organizations like the National Organization for Women and the American Civil Liberties Union to promote the inclusion of marital status as a nondiscrimination category in proposed civil rights legislation.

"Single people feel that they're being ignored or discounted," Mr. Coleman said. "It certainly doesn't make you feel very motivated to go out and vote."

President Clinton skillfully appealed both to people with families and to those who are alone. In his 1996 speech he stressed working families, too, but welcomed anyone who wanted to be part of a larger American family. ◇◇◇

Marital Status Looms as a Major Issue in Fight Over Death & Income Tax Reforms

Clinton vetoes 'death tax' repeal bill

A story published September 1 by the Associated Press reports that House Republican leaders are vowing a prompt attempt to override President Clinton's veto of H.R. 8, a bill repealing estate taxes, but if it fails the death tax debate will play out in the fall election campaigns.

Democrats content that the GOP refused to consider less-costly compromise provisions to help the family farmers and small businesses sometimes hit hard by estate taxes, such as raising exemptions for them without giving a windfall to the wealthiest taxpayers.

The bill, like the marriage penalty tax cut Clinton vetoed a few weeks ago, was part of last year's vetoed \$792 billion tax cut that congressional Republicans are now trying to pass bit by bit.

Only about 2 percent of estates in a given year pay the tax that reaches 55 percent, but sponsors of the repeal won broad support on Capitol Hill by arguing that it inhibits business expansion, threatens breakups of farms and forces millions of taxpayers to pay lawyers, accountants and insurance companies so they can avoid the tax.

"Working men and women across the country recognize that it is simply wrong that after paying taxes your whole life, the government can collect up to 55 percent of these same assets when the head of the family dies," said Rep. Jennifer Dunn, R-Wash. Actually, on very large estates a 5 percent surtax is imposed, making it 60 percent.

In the House, 65 Democrats joined all Republicans in passing the bill this summer, just over the two-thirds threshold necessary to override the veto. House GOP leaders tentatively plan next Thursday to put those Democrats on the spot — particularly those in difficult re-election fights — and some say they'll vote against Clinton.

"The president is wrong, and to his veto I say no," said Rep. Ronnie Shows, D-Miss.

Married couples can totally escape the death tax because unlimited wealth can be left to a surviving spouse without any tax being imposed. But for single people with estates over \$675,000 the government can take up to 60 percent of their estates, assets on which they have already paid income tax or capital gains tax. To unmarried people that seems unfair as a form of double taxation.

Columnist offers solution to end marriage bonuses & penalties of income tax code

The August 31 edition of the San Francisco Chronicle carried a commentary suggesting a solution to the marriage-penalty and marriage-bonus quagmire of the federal tax code. The column was written by Maya

MacGuineas, a fellow at the New America Foundation, a nonpartisan think tank in Washington.

She says that President Clinton was right to veto the marriage penalty legislation Congress sent to him, but not for the reasons he stated. The chief problem with the bill is not that it is too expensive or slanted toward wealthier couples, but that it leaves much of the unfair penalty in place. At the same time, it actually increases the rarely discussed marriage bonus.

MacGuineas argues that the marriage bonus, the one that almost 50 percent of married couples receive for no reason other than marital status and is just as unfair as the marriage penalty. The exaggerated rhetoric on the topic of marriage and taxes leaves many couples bemoaning their penalty, when actually they pay less in taxes than they would if single. The legislation vetoed by the White House addresses only half the problem, while making the other half worse.

According to MacGuineas, both marriage penalties and bonuses are the unintended consequences of a complicated tax system that tries to balance often-conflicting goals. The combination of progressive taxation, where higher incomes are taxed at higher rates and taxing married couples as a single unit leads to inequities in the treatment of couples and singles. The resulting peculiarity is that almost all married couples face different tax liabilities than they would if they were earning the same amount but were single.

Far from punishing all married couples, this arrangement creates almost as many winners as it does losers. MacGuineas gives the example of an individual earning \$70,000 who marries a spouse who does not work. The couple's standard deduction increases from the \$4,400 deduction for singles to the \$7,350 joint deduction. They also qualify for a second personal exemption and wider tax brackets applied to the same single income. All these changes allow more of the worker's income to be taxed at a lower rate. Merely by qualifying as married filers, the couple receives about \$4,000 in tax breaks.

Since couples are treated the same in terms of taxes, their taxes are the same as for another married couple with two earners making \$35,000 apiece. This dual-earner couple is penalized by the joint standard deduction, which is less than double the single deduction, and progressive taxation, which pushes more of their combined income into a higher tax bracket. As a result, they pay roughly \$1,500 extra in taxes.

MacGuineas does not understand why taxpayers should pay either more or less based on their decision to wed — yet almost all of them do. The Treasury estimates that while 25 million couples are hit with an average →

(Continued on back page)

Solution to marriage bonus / penalty (continued)

annual penalty of \$1,100, 21 million couples receive bonuses of a slightly greater amount.

She says that if Congress is serious about addressing tax unfairness, it has chosen a poor strategy to eliminate the marriage penalty. The bill sent to the president increases the standard deduction and widens some income tax brackets for joint filers to eliminate part of the penalty. But not only do these changes fail to remove the penalty entirely, they further reduce taxes for those couples already receiving bonuses.

The \$70,000 single-earner couple would receive an additional bonus on top of their \$4,000 tax break. MacGuineas says this is hardly an improvement in tax fairness -- particularly at a price tag of \$290 billion over the next 10 years, much of which would go to those not being penalized.

MacGuineas suggests that a better approach, and one used in most developed countries, would be simply to tax individuals rather than couples. Under such a system, individuals earning the same incomes would pay the same in taxes, and their liabilities would remain unchanged by marriage.

Addressing a failure of the current legislation, individual taxation would fully eliminate all marriage penalties. And in keeping with principles of fairness, undeserved marriage bonuses would be removed as well. By wiping out both penalties and bonuses, individual taxation would be far less expensive than the current proposal, costing virtually nothing to the Treasury.

As MacGuineas points out in the column, changing the tax code is always challenging, because taxpayers are suspicious that benefits will accrue to someone else at their expense.

If Congress successfully overrides the president's veto, as it will surely attempt to do, singles will certainly have cause to complain. If the goal of marriage penalty legislation is to rid the tax code of unfair treatment of married couples, it will not be achieved by doling out tax cuts indiscriminately to married couples whether or not they are penalized.

On the other hand, taxing individuals would simplify the tax code while ridding it of unjustifiable marriage penalties and subsidies alike.

MacGuineas warns that if Congress chooses to move forward with its boon for married couples, it should brace itself for the ensuing flood of complaints about the resulting "singles tax penalty." ♦♦♦

Support Singles Rights Lobby

Singles Rights Lobby is the legislative advocacy affiliate of the American Association for Single People. We are the only organization representing the political interests of the 80 million unmarried adults in the United States.

We invite you to support Singles Rights Lobby and to become a member of the American Association for Single People. AASP and Singles Rights Lobby work together as a team.

AASP is a tax-exempt nonprofit which works through educational means to promote the well being and equal rights of unmarried adults and domestic partners. Donations to AASP are tax deductible.

You can become a member of AASP by making a tax-deductible donation of \$10 or more to AASP. Call AASP at (800) 993-AASP for a brochure and application, or you can obtain an application form on the AASP website at www.unmarriedAmerica.com.

Singles Rights Lobby works in the political arena, promoting and opposing legislation as well as prodding politicians and political parties to pay attention to the needs of unmarried Americans.

Although Singles Rights Lobby is a nonprofit corporation, donations to it are not tax deductible because we support and oppose specific legislation. All participants in the organization are volunteers. We

have no paid staff. Please get involved. Become a volunteer. Do some research. Write some letters or e-mails. We will find a way to use your talents.

[] I would like to volunteer to help.

Please return this form to *Singles Rights Lobby*, P.O. Box 65756, Los Angeles, CA 90065. (323) 257-2277. E-mail: tomcoleman@earthlink.net.

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