

# The Elephant ... and Donkey in the Room

**Soon, we will go to the polls and make our voices heard as to the future direction of our state and nation. There are as many perspectives and opinions on how best to do this as we have citizens, and that is how it should be.**

BY LARRY J. MARTIN

The United States is only weeks away from what many people have called the most important national election in decades. It has been an intense, long, and dramatic campaign season. To believe the heated political rhetoric, democracy this year is literally on the line.

The truth is that democracy is on the line in every election. Democracy is not a spectator sport; it requires each of us to be informed and engaged. Democracy only succeeds when we participate, become invested in, and ultimately support the outcome, regardless of our personal choices. When everyone votes, everyone wins. That's what self-determination is all about.

By its nature, the next election is always the most important, because it will shape and determine our collective future, and define what we, as American citizens, value in our self-governance.

Over the last few months, we, as a nation, have experienced an unprecedented series of events. For many, it has led to a roller coaster of emotions, eliciting feelings of stress, confusion, exhilaration, sadness, and challenge. It has also been a time of hope and resilience, as we strive to move forward together.

In only a few weeks, we will be asked to cast ballots and make our voices heard as to the future direction of our state and nation. There are as many perspectives and opinions on how best to do this as we have citizens, and that is how it should be.

As we collectively navigate our way, I hope that we do so with respect and that we honor people whose opinions differ from our own. As we remain committed to diversity and inclusion, it is important to remember that this includes diversity of political and ideological thought.

Elections are about competing visions, choices, and priorities. There will be electoral

winners and losers. But when the dust settles, we must be prepared to come together for the common good. We should expect the same from our newly elected leaders. Working to find common ground and building toward consensus should be seen as virtues. Political disagreement is healthy, but being disagreeable and divisive does not move us forward.

On election day, I will get up early, and with my family head down the block to our local polling station. With my neighbors, I will stand in line and wait for our fellow community members who work the polls to open the doors. There, in the privacy of the voting booth, I will mark my ballot. Later that night, my wife (Martha) and I will watch the returns. I will privately cheer for my choices, but when the results are in, I will accept them, and as I always have, support the outcome. **WL**



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