

## What to Expect, Should You be So Naïve as to Run as an Independent for Public Office

by Michael Luick-Thrams, running ["still"] for the US Senate from Iowa

Want a modern civics lesson?

First, forget everything you learned in high school government class about "democracy" and such.

Let me tell you what I've learned, running as an independent for the US Senate for Iowa: It *ain't* pretty.

If you're not a Democrat or Republican, the state's leading paper, the *Des Moines Register*, won't report anything about your candidacy until August—even if, as I did, you announce in April and qualify to run.

If you're not a Democrat or a Republican, Iowa Public Television won't grant you one of its five criterion for being included in a televised debate: To qualify, you "must" meet *all* of the remaining four criteria—one of which is that you've raised \$50,000 or more, even though you can't imagine spending that much; even if you find that much invested in a single person's candidacy wasteful, ridiculous and immoral.

If you're not a Big Name, Iowa Public Radio won't announce your announcement—not until, that is, you finally chase down its news editor and he (who you actually like) capitulates and assigns the story ten days after the fact, issuing the most perfunctory of "Oh, and this just in, too" brief mention-in-passing.

If you're not a Big Name, the Associated Press will sideline you, too, until you demand an explanation for why they haven't announced your announcement—and all you will get back is a phony, cheap, hollow, lackluster "Well, we don't always mention *every* candidate for the US Senate" to which you reply "Well, in the name of journalistic fairness wouldn't you either mention *all, always, or none, ever?*"

If you're not selling your soul to Big Bigness (read: "Monsanto," the "Farm Bureau" or "National Rifle Association"), don't expect donations of more than \$5 here or \$50 there. You're on your own, kiddo—and you better hope that your fellow Americans will "reward" you for your purity and bravery, for *not* being a career politician but, rather, instead a "real person" like a waiter, farmer, trucker or... historian.

If you dare ask deeper questions or air inconvenient truths, expect to be shunned by the media. That 83-year-old incumbent or (at 73) vanilla wanna-be the two mainstream parties are backing will be window-dressed and peddled until the masses elect one or the other "yet again." Forget *real* political change!

If you dare keep running, despite all these institutionalized hurdles, expect irate phone callers to berate you for "spoiling" the election, for "handing" it to the "greater evil" at the expense of the "lessor" one.

If you insist on running because you feel morally compelled to do *something*—even if naïve—to counter the swelling madness, expect former classmates, fellow congregants, friends, even family to vote against you just because they don't want to "waste [their] vote on an independent candidate" even as they grumble how "horrible" and vapid the "lessor evil" really is. Still, they'd hold their nose and vote askew.

If you ask them to vote their conscience, be prepared to see that they don't *have* one anymore: "That's so 20<sup>th</sup> century, so out of fashion; it just isn't 'realistic' anymore." Cynicism is in—and *you're* out! **[END]**