

# THE GEO-SAMPLER

Ah, election time. The magical season where we citizens of this great nation come together to cast our ballot for those we will be complaining about for the next two, four or six years. But did you know that the elections the world has come to know and love (well, at least know) have had quite a history? And over the years they've attracted some pretty unusual candidates - ones that make your Representative look fairly boring. Or competent. Or effective. So sit back and enjoy a closer inspection of this uniquely human spectacle. And we promise, no hanging chads.

## REALLY, REALLY EARLY RETURNS.

You step into the booth. You pull a lever or push a button. And then you get the little "I voted" sticker that says you did a highly cherished civic duty. Seems quite natural. But it took many a millennium to actually get to that point. And the road to today's process is even longer and windier than a voter recount.

Now, it's often believed that voting democracies got their start in ancient Greece around 500 BC. Well, that time period looks to be slightly off - by a few millennia. It is now becoming more accepted that tribal democracies were a part of early civilizations, wherein small communities would see face-to-face discussions among the village elders and decisions would be made within that council. And all without the aid of cable news punditry.

Before the age of Sumerian kings, major city-states in ancient Mesopotamia, a council of elders and a council of "young men" had to be consulted on all major issues, such as war. And around the sixth century BC in India, the Shakyas tribe, whose most famous member was Gautama Buddha, had a deliberative assembly that was open to all men, rich and poor, while the Licchavis tribe had a primary governing body of the head of only the most important families. So, you could guess which one would've been more supported by the local Super PAC.

And then there's ancient Greece where, as we all know, the roots of western democ-

racy took hold, and life, according to the films you watched in school, was governed by British Shakespearean actors. One interesting note of early Athenian elections was that of a plurality vote process called "ostracism," where voters chose the citizen they most wanted to exile for ten years.

Which would immediately be followed by an acceptance speech that went something like this: "I am truly honored and humbled to be hated by so many of you. I'll show myself out. Please don't hurt me."

But the most convoluted method of voting has to go to the Venetians. For 500 years (1268-1797) they elected their representatives, or Doge, by way of five rounds of drawing lots and five rounds of approval voting among powerful Venetian families. You see, first, by drawing lots, a body of 30 electors was chosen, which was further reduced to nine electors by drawing lots again. Then, an electoral college of nine members elected 40 people by approval voting. Those 40 were reduced to form a second electoral college of - you know what, it's all on Wikipedia.

What this all means is that the next time you make your choice, remember how fortunate you are to be able to have that choice. And that you're not running from the gates of Athens with the locals hurling stones your way.



*If I were two-faced,  
would I be wearing  
this one?*

*—Abraham Lincoln*



### being social: the status of x

- X is harvesting paperclips from work
- X is not the droid you're looking for.
- X is carbon based.
- X is "not the issue here, Dude."
- X is "never on schedule, but always on time."
- X is walking through the intensive care unit dressed as the grim reaper
- X is havingtrou blewithis spacebar.
- X is going off the rails on a crazy train
- X has been modified from his original version. He has been formatted to fit your screen.
- X is filmed in front of a live studio audience
- X is part of a complete breakfast
- X is not yet rated.
- X is magically delicious.
- X is "childish. No he's not, yes he is, no he's not, yes he is."
- X is the walrus

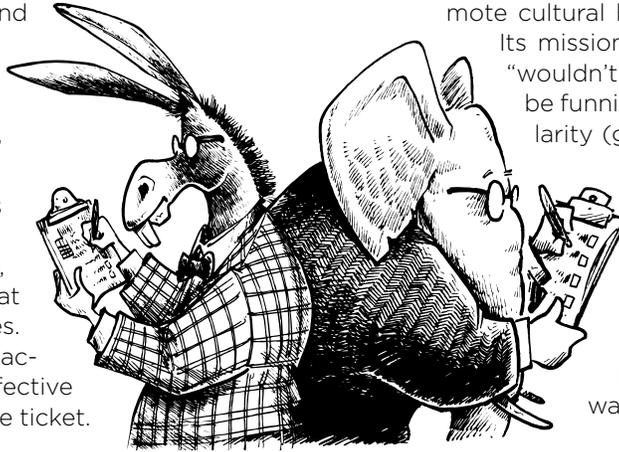
# REPRESENTING THE GREAT STATE OF WEIRDNESS.

Say the word “party” in the context of politics and one thought often comes to mind, “We’re right. They’re nuts.” And, yes, our political affiliations have led us to look at each other with curiosity from time to time. But for a true taste of bizarreness, there were a few political parties that, thankfully, never showed up on your ballot.

For starters, there’s our neighbors to the north and the Rhinoceros Party of Canada, which for nearly 30 years (1963-1993) consistently made headlines with such campaign promises as to annex the United States, repeal the law of gravity, and “keep none of our promises.”

They actually finished second in one Federal election where they nominated a clown. Then again, what party hasn’t?

By the way, don’t confuse this party with the 1958 São Paulo city council election in which Cacareco, a rhinoceros at the zoo, won a seat with approximately 100,000 votes. Although his candidacy was never accepted, he was just as highly an effective public servant as anyone else on the ticket.



Not to be outdone, Denmark was home to the Union of Conscientiously Work-Shy Elements party. Started in 1979 by comedian, Jacob Haugaard, he actually wound up winning a seat in parliament in 1994 on the strength of such campaign promises as more bread for the ducks in the park, better weather, and the right to impotency. Not really sure which part of the constituency he was going after with that last one.

Finally, there was the Polish Beer-Lovers’ Party. Founded in 1990 by Polish satirist, Janusz Rewinski, its goal was to promote cultural beer drinking instead of vodka.

Its mission statement was that the party “wouldn’t be better but for sure it would be funnier.” Surprisingly, it grew in popularity (gee, I wonder why) and eventually won 16 seats in Poland’s lower house of parliament.

It soon split into the Large Beer and Small Beer factions with the former, through a series of mergers, eventually becoming Poland’s Democratic Party. See? You can party your way to becoming a party.

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