

## Never Forget...

BY Dave Andrusko

During election season the U.S. Postal Service is inundated in a tsunami of campaign-related mail. Depending on whether it was able to keep its collective head above water, you're receiving this edition of National Right to Life News very close to the November 7 elections or a couple of weeks before. Either way, I am sure that the people who make up our Movement—people like you—will have already built up a head of steam, knowing how much is at stake.

I don't believe in bemoaning the obvious or the more-or-less unchangeable. The simple truth is that the turnout for "off-year" elections—the even-numbered years when there are no presidential elections to attract the casual voter—is dramatically smaller.

By the same token this underwhelming figure means that the relative value of each vote is considerably higher. So when you energize your pro-life family, friends, and colleagues to take part in one of the great blessings of living in a democracy, you are not only helping elect those who believe in the equality of life ethos, you are also exercising your civic duty.

In a given election, some issues cycle through very quickly, vanishing without a trace. For example, a few weeks ago when gas prices were very high, 15% of the people polled in one prominent survey considered energy prices to be the nation's most pressing problem. With oil prices plummeting, that percentage is now in the low single digits and sinking fast.

What moves voters is an almost mystical compound of idealism, economic interest, personal history, knowledge (or lack thereof), loyalty, faith, and the people with whom voters associate. For people like us—and our anti-life counterparts—abortion is the central, defining issue this election season and every election season.

But for most people its urgency can be drowned out by the cacophony of voices talking about many other issues—some ephemeral—like the \$3.00 a gallon price of gas—others more enduring. The din of competing messages can be overpowering, if you and I don't serve to filter out the static.

And, judging by previous elections, we've accomplished that goal quite nicely. While you will virtually never see this truism acknowledged in the "mainstream media," we have a proven track record of success.

Among those for whom abortion is the issue that determines their vote, candidates who espouse the pro-life position virtually always come out comfortably ahead of their pro-abortion opponent.

Do I mean always and everywhere? Of course not, that would be silly. But in most cases the pro-life candidate will be the beneficiary of a net gain as high as 3%. In an electorate that grows ever more closely divided, potentially that "increment" can be decisive.

As we've pointed out in previous editions, pro-abortion groups (such as EMILY's List) have more money than you can shake a stick at. With pro-abortion candidates, it can sometimes seem as if "money" is their middle name.

But while almost drowning in dollars is unquestionably an advantage for them, it has not, and will not, offset our primary asset—people power—provided each of us does what we do best. Granted, that is a big "if," but it is one you and I can control.

One final thought on the eve of the 2006 off-year elections. Getting every single pro-lifer to the polls in every state in the Union is of crucial importance.

But something has dawned on me in recent years, something I am embarrassed to admit I missed for the longest time. While we enjoy the advantage among "single-issue" abortion voters, that is a limited (albeit growing) pool of people.

But our impact is not limited to just our own whom we rally. During the course of an election season, many, many people will come to tentative conclusions based on pro- and anti-life messages.

By that I do not primarily mean educational literature, although that is vitally important as well. I mean rather the "message" that each of us as individuals sends by the very nature of the people that we are. Why is that enormously important? For two complementary reasons.

First, for most people, the only "Pro-Life Movement" they will ever meet is you! You are the Movement for 99% of the population.

Second, often it seems as if it is the most unlikely prospect who first puts his toe in the water by voting for pro-life candidates but who then dives in head first by joining our ranks. We don't know, cannot know, people's histories or what will prove decisive.

What we can know is that when our behavior demonstrates our transparent love and concern for both mother and unborn child, it acts like a magnet. People who have made no strong commitment are attracted by a vision of life that does not pit mothers against their children.

To change the metaphor, more people than you might realize are balanced on one foot. Eventually they are going to come down on one side or the other. Where they land may well be decided by what they see in you and in me.

Thank you for all that you've been doing for the littlest Americans. Thank you for all that you will do.

It is my privilege to work with such marvelous human beings.

Dave Andrusko can be reached at [dandrusko@nrlc.org](mailto:dandrusko@nrlc.org).