

## **Hanging chads and one thing Trump and I agree on**

*Melody A. Kramer/June 19, 2016*

In 2000, the country was embroiled in a knockdown, drag out fight over who had been elected president – George Bush or Al Gore. After all the ballots were in and preliminarily counted, it showed that Bush won and Democrats cried foul. How could that happen? Surely there was some malfeasance somewhere, erroneous counts, confusing ballots, hanging chads, it couldn't be that Gore had legally lost. There were rounds of legal challenges, all necessarily tinged with questions about the political leanings of the judges involved, and 24/7 television coverage of squinty Florida eyes analyzing punch card ballots for hanging chads. Who "won" changed back and forth through the courts and in the media. Across the country protesters lined the streets vehemently exercising their First Amendment rights on who should be president, including me. When all was said and done, the U.S. Supreme Court weighed in and the election was confirmed in favor of Bush. For the remainder of his term, Democrats claimed that the election was stolen.

What this chapter in our history did disclose in alarming fashion were all manner of problems with our election systems. Outdated technology and lack of common sense review of procedures came to the forefront and did prompt some subsequent changes. As far as I was concerned, changes to the process of voting should only be changed *between* elections, not between casting the votes and declaring a winner. Process vs. outcome. Rules vs. consequences. Which are more important?

Why am I bringing up hanging chads again in this election cycle? Simple. It is now the Republicans turn to decide whether process or outcome, rules or consequences, win the day in their party selection of a Presidential nominee. Now it's the Republicans' turn to seek out hanging chads or any other way to stop the runaway train of Donald Trump's campaign.

The whole idea of having a system, a process for important decisions in our democracy is this – we have designed and implement processes that will, more likely than not, result in outcomes that we want. It is not 100% guaranteed, but more likely than not. Where our democracy is severely challenged is when the process does not generate the outcome we want, like when application of Constitutional safeguards for criminal defendants result in release of someone we are sure committed a crime. Or when someone we don't want as President becomes a major party nominee.

I'll be honest. As an independent voter, I have been watching Trump win state after state of Republican delegates over the past months with disconcerted confusion. What do these conservative voters see in a foul-mouthed, argumentative New Yorker with zero governmental experience, who brags that he could "stand in the middle of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and shoot someone" and not lose voters? And I have also been watching important people in the Republican party realizing the damage that Trump is inflicting on the party, negative influences that may affect hundreds of other contested races. There is talk of secret efforts to change rules for the convention and somehow, some way, stop Trump from getting on the ballot in November.

Sadly, I'm going to have to side with Trump on this one. For the Republican Party, the votes are in. Their party constituents have given Donald Trump enough votes to get enough delegates to become their party's nominee. Do I want Trump to win the general election? Emphatically NO! I've seen the danger

in his ideas from the start. Do I think the Republicans should change their rules mid-nominee-election process for their party? No. They've anchored themselves to a whale that may end up sinking the entire party ship in this election cycle (Trump's 70% disapproval rating in recent polls is recordbreaking). They'll just have to grab life vests and be dragged, soaking wet, out of the water by the nearest Coast Guard vessel. Then they should revisit their processes and make sure a "Trump" never happens to them again.

Rules vs. consequences. Process vs. outcome. Which side do you stand on?