

Ramaswamy's New Idea on the Voting Age Merits Consideration



CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA – MARCH 18: Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy waits to take the stage at the Vision '24 National Conservative Forum March 18, 2023 in Charleston, South Carolina. The event, hosted by the Palmetto Family Council, is intended to provide conservative politicians an opportunity to outline their vision for the United States ahead of the 2024 election. (Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images)

by Roger L. Simon

One thing we don't often get in our campaigns—presidential or otherwise—is a fresh idea worth thinking about. Mostly, campaigns consist of boilerplate laced with invective toward

opponents in endless mind-numbing ads.

When such ideas do turn up, they're frequently ignored, especially by our ultra-conformist mainstream media that abhors originality as much as nature abhors a vacuum.

Donald Trump has one of these fresh ideas this time around with his proposal to build new cities on federal land with their own industries that could act as self-sufficient refuges from our inflationary economy and reduce dependence on China.

Nobody's discussing it and, needless to say, it wasn't mentioned in CNN's May 10 Townhall with its "moderator" more focused on "gotcha" questions.

Now presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy has stepped forward with an idea that deserves equal, if not more, consideration because it speaks to many of the problems confronting our country, particularly among the younger generation.

Ramaswamy wants to enact a constitutional amendment that would repeal the 26th that set the voting age at 18 and only allow those between 18 and 25 to vote if they fulfilled one of two requirements.

Either they do 6 months of direct service in the U.S. military or first response service (police, fire, and so forth.... I have a further suggestion on this I will get to later).

Or...

They pass a test in U. S. civics identical to the one immigrants are required to pass in order to be naturalized citizens of this country.

If they do neither, they get to vote anyway at 25, the same age, Ramaswamy points out in a May 11 press release, "by which young male adults are required under current U.S. law to complete Selective Service registration."

That civics test required of aspiring immigrants includes such things as a basic understanding of the roles of the three branches of government, something a young person really should know in order to vote. Fifty years ago, they probably did. Now? Not likely.

The left, which doesn't even think someone needs identification to vote, is going to howl about this test requirement, a reaction that meshes with their general condescending attitude toward minorities. They assume they can't do what everyone else does when they absolutely can and have. There's no other way to look at that than as morally repellent racism.

Actually, in a country whose educational system has been worsening for years, with even the average IQ declining, Ramaswamy's idea may encourage a long-neglected study discipline among our young that appears to be absent in many of our schools given the results. Young people will have to work to pass the test, although, in the final analysis, it is not all that difficult.

But allow me to look back at the first requirement in the proposal. Ramaswamy says in the same press release: "Our military currently suffers a 25% recruitment deficit, and only 16 percent of Gen Z say they're proud to be American. The absence of national pride is a serious threat to the future of our country."

Indeed. And this could do something to improve that recruitment deficit and maybe diminish some of the wokeness in the military in the process. A good thing all around.

Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy waits to take the stage in Charleston, South Carolina, on March 18, 2023. (Win McNamee/Getty Images)

But the alternate part of that requirement—participation in "first response services"—piques my interest even more. And it

could generate just as much national pride.

Another candidate currently competing for his party's presidential nomination, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., had an uncle who on March 1, 1961—not even two months after his inauguration—signed an executive order establishing the Peace Corps.

I am old enough to remember when that happened and to recall how it inspired so many of us young people at that time, regardless of political party. It made us proud to be Americans, a feeling sorely lacking today, as Vivek points out.

What Ramaswamy is suggesting harkens back to that—and more power to him. I would love to see RFK Jr., another candidate with fresh ideas, respond. And maybe add ideas of his own for a new version of the corps that makes sense for our complex times.

We live in a polarized world where creative communication between people of opposite parties almost never happens.

But some kind of renewed public service for the young is something leaders on both sides should be able to get behind.



President John F. Kennedy in an undated photograph courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. (Reuters/JFK Presidential Library)

With summer coming, Antifa and Black Lives Matter will be out in the streets, acting out in their familiar destructive and pointless ways. Sometimes I think this, at least in part, is a product of boredom, even though, of course, a lot of other bad things contribute.

Still, these are young people with nothing to do. We should give them something, something constructive. It's obvious they will resist, but we should still try.

That is why I am heartened by the candidacies of both Vivek Ramaswamy and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. They are forward-thinking. They have ideas.

This should also remind us in this campaign season that there

is more to be gleaned, if we pay attention, than who is up in today's polls and who ultimately wins and loses.

That five-letter word—ideas—exists.

Further, with Trump lapping the field at this moment (Biden is more questionable), it's still worth paying attention to the other candidates for those ideas and for the possibility that they will fulfill other roles in our government, even if they don't reach the presidency this time.

This is a tumultuous era. We should be open to everything and everybody.... Well, almost.

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