

**ZEITGEIST**

The Spirit of the Times – November 2012



**ELECTIONS 2012**

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### **Leaders of the Political Awareness Club**

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### **About the Club**

In a matter of years, our generation will be the status quo. We will be running the businesses and casting the votes and contributing to the culture that will serve to identify our country for decades to come. As such, it is our duty to cultivate a devotion to political curiosity and vigilance so that we can shape this future in the most well-informed manner we possibly can. The Political Awareness Club is a part of that cultivation, providing an environment for students to discuss and debate what is going on in the world and develop their own unique perspective they can carry with them into the adult world. We meet on Thursday afternoons in Mr. Szabs's room (B407). All are welcome to attend.

**NOTE:** The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and are in no way intended to reflect those of Fairfield Prep as an institution.

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## **A Basic Summary of Political Debate in America**

By Patrick Miles '13

A Conservative's View

Social laws are an attempt to impose the absolute on a reality that is not absolute. For this reason, exemptions are always present and relativity and power of opinion is allowed to permeate these laws, as we attempt to fit an absolute concept such as law onto an infinite and unpredictable world. Subsequently, as the presence of social law increases, so does the presence of exemption from specific aspects of it. I propose that a goal of equality, such that each and every person experiences minimal hindrances on a path to success, while not depreciating the status of the realm of success, is the most worthy and basic goal of a society. It is important to remember that should this goal be reached and each and every person should be limited in their potential for success only by themselves, that as a group of cooperative beings, we

will collectively and constantly move towards a higher standard of success. The route of equality of regulation to attempt to control and equalize hindrances to potential success simply clouds this path to success with law and exemption, contradicting the goal of reducing hindrances and actually increasing them by adding confusion and chaos in the guise of equality and order. This path also introduces relativity, further potentially clouding the path to success with the imposing of opinion. Due to the fact that laws are generally equal for everyone in theory, they in a sense negate. However this can be seen as a false "zero", or a guise for true and natural process, which only truly operates in a basic and non-artificial condition. When we impose ideas and concepts such as law onto a reality, we simply create a façade of equality while true equality evades us and lives only in basicness. Hence, we may observe that the only true path of achievement of our goal is

reducing regulation and social law to a minimum, so that each and every person is limited by nothing but themselves, rather than introducing law and all the hindrances that follow it, including relative interpretation of it, and the fact that creators of law hold power over all others to some extent, which subsequently creates more inequality.

#### A Liberal's View

In order for the goal of equality, such that each and every person experiences minimal hindrances on a path to success, while not depreciating the status of the realm of success to even be worked towards, a sort of equal playing field must be established. Due to the ever-existing fact that people will never be truly and naturally equal from birth, some sort of outside force must be imposed to create this equal base or field. That force is exemplified by

government. In this role, government has a responsibility, verified by those who establish and uphold the government, to the best of its ability, even the scales, such that each and every person, from birth, can obtain the same level of success with the same effort as anyone else. With this goal given, and the role of government affirmed as the aforementioned, law, specifically social law, inhabits the role of a safeguard in that it protects against an even more imbalanced playing field. Government programs then act as an equalizer, in that they granted weighed and calculated benefits to counteract inhibitors of success that many people are born into, such as unfortunate economic conditions, poor parenting backgrounds, or many other factors that set them behind on a path to success. In this respect, government ideally should not be an intrusion on the chances of those born into fortunate circumstances, but rather a facilitator for success for those born

into less fortunate circumstances, or who have been struck with unforeseeable or incurable hindrances, such as debilitating disease.

### Concluding Verdict

The debate between conservative and liberal will forever endure, as it is more a debate on the effects of relativity and equality on society as a whole. The most important thing to remember, however, is that both these ideologies share an equal goal, of reaching a state of equality of opportunity such that each and every person is minimally inhibited on the path to success. For this reason, one should indeed take Machiavelli's advice when he stated that "the ends justify the means" with regard to ideological affiliation. The accomplishment of this goal is the most important aspect of society, and conservative or liberal ideologies are simply thought patterns that differ on method, but do indeed share the same goal.



## **Illegal Immigration**

By Ryan Brickner '14

Illegal immigration is among the touchiest subjects in American politics. What should we do with illegal immigrants? Do we allow them to stay or should we deport them? It is a multi-faceted issue with many implications either way you tilt the issue. On one hand, it is an illegal subversion of the American law system and puts a burden on systems like Medicare. On the other hand, they provide a source of cheap labor along with being somewhat constitutionally protected. It also presents a moral issue of whether to send them back to the conditions they originally fled from. Either way, there will be consequences and challenges to any alteration or keeping course with the current system.

The largest argument against illegal immigration is found in the phrase itself, "ILLEGAL immigration." It is circumventing the established system of immigration to the US, which given is a very long and drawn out process most of the time. Many people, including myself, take the stance that by supporting and rewarding illegal immigrants is like rewarding people who cheat and thus creates an unfair environment. An image is then portrayed that the government supports breaking the laws, which is a large negative.

Many times, illegal immigrants are able to tap into resources reserved for American citizens without being citizens. Due to the way the healthcare system operates, hospitals cannot reject people that are uninsured. Because of this, a strain is

put on the economy and regular citizens of America. Hospitals have to make money and if there are people taking medical benefits without paying for them, someone has to foot the bill and that is other people who have to go to the hospital and are handed a higher bill than it would be. Another way they take advantage is by voting in elections. Only citizens are constitutionally allowed to vote but that is very easy to get around due to lax voter identification laws. Another system in which they are able to benefit from is the public school system. Smaller class sizes are helpful for students but become harder to do with more illegal immigrant students. This also creates yet another burden for state governments and taxpayers.

Another way illegal immigrants impact the US is by taking jobs. Because they regularly take wages lower than a normal citizen they circumvent competition for labor and that results in lower wage scales for lower salaried workers. Although this system benefits some businesses it hurts competition for labor.

On the flip side, illegal immigrants do provide positives for the economy. Many of the jobs they take are jobs normal citizens don't want anyway. Without them, some jobs like low paying ones on farms would go unfilled and production will fall. Illegal immigrants most likely do not pay taxes on these jobs. They are likely paid under the counter for their work. Their pay is low enough that they would qualify to be in the lowest tax bracket.

When illegal immigrants work in formal jobs, social security taxes and other

taxes are automatically withdrawn from their salaries just like every other American. Although they are paying into the system they will not be able to receive the benefits from them because they are not citizens. When tax forms are supposed to be sent in, many illegal immigrants do not fill them out and because of that are unable to claim refunds from the government.

The last issue in this article will be about the social implications of illegal immigration. Is it right to deport illegal immigrants back to the place where they were fleeing from in the first place? The ethical answer should be no. America prides itself of a place for equal opportunity and the “American Dream” but isn’t it against these ideals to deny them a chance for this? Once they have children in the country, it gets even more complicated. The 14<sup>th</sup> amendment states that anybody born in the US is a US citizen including children of illegal immigrants. If you deport the child’s parents, what do you do with the child? You can’t deport them along with the parent so the only choices are an orphanage or to not deport the parents.

Illegal immigration is one of the touchiest subjects in America. No matter which side you take you can expect both supporters and detractors ready to point out how you are wrong, making this an extremely polarizing issue. It is an issue that provides legitimate arguments for both sides which puts the burden of proof on the individual. Again, the bottom line is it is illegal and puts some strain on social programs while taking jobs away from American citizens. Those arguments are countered by the fact that the immigrants are constitutionally protected and represent a

cheap labor source. You, the reader, now have some facts to make your own decision. With these facts, make an educated decision to support whichever side of the aisle you chose, and back it up with the facts.



## Got Grass?

By Tom Garzillo '14

When Barack Obama campaigned for President in 2008, supporters of marijuana legalization for both medical and personal use seemed to have a reason to be excited. Vowing to put a stop to the raids of medical pot dispensaries conducted under the Bush administration, then candidate Obama appeared to be a leader willing to begin to end the failing and ridiculous war on drugs. However, flash-forward to today, and President Obama's continued assault on the medical marijuana industry has far surpassed that of any of his predecessors.

Approximately 730,000 US citizens depend on prescribed marijuana for their health and well-being. Despite this vast number, the US government under President Obama and head of DEA Acting Administrator Michelle Leonhart has continued to crack down on dispensaries that fully comply with state laws. In cities like Oakland, California, who stood to make over \$31 million in revenue through licensed dispensaries, threats from the federal government to prosecute distributors with the same methods reserved for the worst cartels quickly ended the Oakland movement. Similarly, in Washington, state dispensary employees were threatened with federal prosecution. In Rhode Island, almost identical threats brought state licensed dispensaries to close, denying prescribed marijuana to badly sickened patients.

The persecution of dispensaries under the current administration is

widespread and indiscriminant. In Marin County, California, the home of the country's highest breast cancer rates, federal officials shut down a large dispensary that served many cancer patients. In the rest of California, similar efforts took away \$200,000 in tax dollars and over 2000 jobs from the state. In an already troubled economy, the Obama administration has done nothing positive in regard to the jobs and profits that medical marijuana can bring.

Rather than adjust the policy on marijuana to better fit a changing world, the DEA under President Obama has chosen to remain under the policies of the Bush administration. Marijuana remains a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance amongst the likes of drugs proven to be exceedingly more harmful such as heroin and ecstasy. Under this classification, the DEA refuses to acknowledge the proven benefits of marijuana in respect to treating some of the world's most dangerous illnesses. Studies have linked marijuana to improvement in patients with Alzheimer's, Epilepsy, MS, and Hepatitis C. Yet despite the obvious health benefits, the government continues to fight against efforts to distribute marijuana to the sick.

In addition to threatening law abiding dispensaries, the DEA under President Obama has attacked the legalization movement on multiple fronts. In 2011, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms denied those prescribed marijuana by their doctor the right to own a weapon. The administration has gone after the cash of the industry as well, threatening large banks such as Bank of America and Chase

with federal prosecution if they are to do business with authorized dispensaries. Under the Obama administration, the IRS has made it impossible for pot distributors to deduct expenses, as efforts to crush the business economically continue.

Despite the continued efforts of the US government to demonize marijuana and its users, the population is beginning to support its legalization/decriminalization. A recent CBS News poll found that 77% of Americans support medicinal marijuana, while another poll by Gallup found that 50% of citizens favor full legalization. While there is certainly an age gap, with those under 30 favoring legalization twice that of those above 65, it is indisputable that there is a growing pro-legalization sentiment in America today. In yet another study by Rasmussen, 56% of those questioned believed that marijuana should be legalized and taxed in a way similar to tobacco and alcohol. It is clear that although the US government is vehemently opposed to common sense in this matter, the American people are not so naïve.

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect to those in favor of marijuana legalization is the consequences of the actions that the federal government takes. Rather than make America safer, the continued assault on dispensaries and medicinal users has driven up street prices by 20%, putting more money in the hands of violent drug kingpins and warring cartels. As the Obama administration leaves current distributors without valid financial options available, the United States loses millions of dollars in potential revenue.

The “grotesque, monumental stupidity of the drug war”, as Tim Dickinson of Rolling Stone magazine puts it, is made crystal clear in the ludicrous amount of arrests related to simple possession. In 2011, nearly 800,000 people in America were arrested for possession of marijuana. Out of these 800,000, nearly 700,000 possessed less than 1 ounce. If you are still unconvinced as to the absurd frequency these nonviolent offenders are arrested, approximately one person is arrested for possession every 42 seconds. In fact, in the time it took for you to read the last two paragraphs, it is likely that somewhere in America, another arrest has been made.

With the presidential election just days away, it is interesting to note that neither candidate has discussed the topic of legalization. As both Governor Romney and President Obama battle over the economy and the debt, they have both avoided addressing what some experts say is potentially a \$120 billion dollar business. To put that in perspective, that’s around 20% of the federal defense budget. In what is undoubtedly a country now leaning towards legalization, the lack of dialogue regarding marijuana is clear evidence that the federal government’s attack on the business will continue regardless of who becomes our next president.

In fact, who may become our next president may be directly linked to marijuana after all. In Colorado, a key swing state in this year’s election, more than 50% of people support legalization. In what could have been an easy victory for President Obama in a largely liberal state, his decision

to combat dispensaries within the region may cost him the vital 9 electoral votes it provides. However, the votes that may cost him the state will not go to Mitt Romney. They will instead likely go to Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson, who is a known supporter of legalization. While it is not guaranteed, should Obama lose Colorado, it may very well be attributed to his staunch anti-marijuana position.

While national legalization is still a distant hope for many, the growing national opposition to the clearly failing narco-wars is becoming apparent. And as new medical studies are released showing the health benefits of marijuana, the legalization movement is likely to grow stronger. Although President Obama has disappointed millions with his continuation of the Bush drug policies, the next president, Obama or Romney will face the same issues, the same growing calls for legalization, and the same controversy. Stay tuned.



## **Ignorance in America**

By Michael Kokias '15

Is ignorance really bliss? Or is ignorance a key factor in the lack of credibility of the choices made by the American voter? When America is facing such a pivotal election, is it truly right that some voters do not know many of the ideas of whom they are supporting?

A few weeks ago, Howard Stern, a radio personality and television host, sent his team out to the streets of Harlem to interview some residents and see what their take was on the election. The people Stern's team interviewed cleared up quite a few "misconceptions": Osama bin Laden is, in fact, still alive, Romney is pro-choice, Obama is pro-life, and Paul Ryan is actually Obama's running mate. One woman interviewed, when asked if she wasn't voting for Romney because he was pro-choice (Obama is pro-choice, not Romney)

said, " Yes, and it's just him in general. I just don't like him." Now, these results should be taken with a grain of salt. Stern did not interview a diverse group of people but, the idea that Stern's team was trying to convey remained evident; there is a group of Americans who are not voting for President Obama based on his beliefs, but simply based on the color of his skin or the fact that they may not like Mitt Romney's personality. News flash: the people of America are not voting for a new best friend, they should be voting for a Commander in Chief who will not only lead us out of the recession but keep our country and it's people safe.

In March of this year, Alexandra Pelosi went to Mississippi, one of the nations most conservative states. She talked to several men about their feelings on President Obama and government. An old man, likely in his 80s or 90s, when asked

why he did not like to even listen to Obama speak, he said it was because Obama is a “half-breed”, referring to the fact that he is half Caucasian and half African-American. One Mississippi man, when talking about his grandparents and parents said that, “Back then, people pulled their own weight, they didn’t sit around for everyone else to take care of them.” These series of interviews, although like Stern’s interviews in Harlem, were based more around mocking the ignorance of those Mississippi residents, not pointing to the ignorance itself.

One of the greatest sources of ignorance is corruption in the media. Anyone who watches the news knows that Fox is conservative, MSNBC is liberal and CNN floats somewhere in the middle. The fact is these news organizations are trying to spread their political beliefs. Fox News says that they are “Fair and Balanced.” This is a

half-truth. Fox News does usually point out both sides of the story, but they always take the liberal side in a darker tone. An example is Bill O’Reilly, host of the O’Reilly Factor. O’Reilly always calls his show the “No Spin Zone”, indicating that he will take a non-partisan view on the days trending topics, when it is clear to viewers that he is supporting a conservative candidate. Even O’Reilly himself acknowledges this at points, but he always says that he is simply giving the viewers the facts. But Fox News is not the only culprit in being biased. MSNBC has been known for their liberal tendencies, such as staying away from subjects that may harm the Democratic Party. On October 10<sup>th</sup> at noon, The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform convened for a hearing focused on the September 11 attack on the Libyan consulate in Benghazi. But instead of covering that hearing, the news program

*Now with Alex Wagner* spent it's time attacking Romney.

So is ignorance really bliss? It all comes down to how not only Americans portray someone, but how the people and news stations around them portray someone. It is not widely known, but the phrase "Ignorance is bliss" is only half of the line from a poem. The whole line is "When ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." So in the end, an American's lack of knowledge may be his or her choice to know only what they want to know. But in these troubling times, it is better to see all the facts, not just what you want to see and believe.



## **Medical Marijuana**

By James Mangan

What is the most polarizing issue in America? Same-sex marriage? Abortion rights? The biggest topic that does not get any attention from the media is the legalization of marijuana. In my fifteen or so years, people that I have encountered and discussed this issue with all feel strongly about legalization. Generally speaking, our generation, especially here in the liberal Northeast, believe that the American people have the right to choose whether or not they want to smoke pot. Older generations typically believe that using pot should continue to be illegal, even for medicinal purposes. Unfortunately, not many people have looked into this subject, yet they are firm in their beliefs. I believe that if you invest some time researching the hard facts, it is clearly evident that pot should not only be legalized for medicinal use, but for recreational use as well.

The first recorded use of medical marijuana was nearly 5,000 years ago. The Chinese emperor Shen Nung used the drug to ease the pain caused by rheumatism and gout. And since then, up until about the last century, weed has been socially acceptable in treating pain. Today, states like California, Rhode Island and Vermont have laws so that people suffering from such awful diseases like MS, AIDS, cancer, glaucoma etc. can treat their pain. In fact, studies have shown that cancer patients that smoke pot have a better chance of entering remission than non-marijuana users.

In 1619, the first ever law regarding marijuana was created in the American colonies. In the law, farmers were **REQUIRED** to grow hemp. Both Thomas Jefferson and George Washington grew hemp. In fact, the first two copies of the Declaration of Independence were written on paper made from hemp, as was Betsy Ross' flag and the sails on Christopher

Columbus' ships. Yes, pot is about as American as apple pie. So you must be thinking to yourself, "Why did an herb that played such a large yet unnoticed role in the history of this great country become illegal?" The answer: big business.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many wealthy and influential people in various industries, like paper and textiles, found that timber was cheaper than hemp, and larger profits could be made. Naturally, the best way to make sure your competition does not use a more reliable product, and therefore narrow your sales, is to use your connections in the U.S. government to get said product outlawed. But what is as true today as it was back then, is that people couldn't care less if it's illegal.

Approximately 100 million Americans (roughly a third of the total population) have admitted to smoking pot, and 25 million have smoked pot in the past year. 40% of U.S. high school students

admit to have experimenting with marijuana, and 20% smoke it regularly. A lot of people smoke pot! And yet no matter how clear the American public makes it that they're fine with pot, we spend billions of dollars on the War on Drugs. Republican Presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan supported this war, and Republican Presidential nominee Mitt Romney continues to support it. Surprisingly, President Barack Obama, whom Republicans these days seem to believe has the number 666 stamped on the back of his head, opposes legalization.

As you can see, this isn't a fight on rational vs. delusional. This is a fight against those who support failed policy, even when all the evidence is against them. Marijuana is a billion-dollar industry. The solution is to legalize it, tax the hell out of it, and regulate the industry. Thousands of jobs will be created! But hey, that would be bringing too much logic to the debate, something a large

portion of our population is clearly allergic to. Our gang problem would also be significantly reduced. What gang would wish to be in the business of something that the public can get legally? During the prohibition, bootlegging was a very risky but profitable enterprise.

Today, I don't hear about people killing each other so they can sell booze. But our generation does not have to stand for this. We are the future of America and I think we have made it pretty clear that the best solution is to legalize pot. The main message of our movement is one that really should resonate with the American people as a whole: who is the government to tell us what we can or cannot do with our own bodies?



## **GOP Nominee Mitt Romney**

By Owen Gibson '13

The GOP nominee for the 2012 Presidential Election is Willard Mitt Romney, former Governor of Massachusetts. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Gov. Romney has led a distinguished career in the private sector. Starting in the management consulting industry at Bain & Company, he worked his way up to CEO and saved the company from financial crisis. He then proceeded to cofound and run a spin-off company, Bain Capital, which became one of the largest private equity investment firms in the nation. Romney's other exploits include serving as the head of his local Mormon congregation and successfully running the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Mitt Romney attempted to enter politics in the 1994 Massachusetts Election for U.S. Senate, but he was defeated. However, his political career was successfully started when he was elected Governor of Massachusetts in 2002. As Governor, Romney enacted health care reform, which provided near-universal health insurance access through state-level subsidies and individual mandates to purchase insurance. In the face of a \$1.2-1.5 billion dollar deficit, Gov. Romney was able to balance the budget four years in a row through spending cuts, increased fees, and the closure of corporate tax loopholes.

Rather than seek re-election as Governor, Romney used his small personal fortune to fund his Presidential Campaign in 2008. While he won several primaries and

caucuses, Romney ultimately endorsed John McCain and withdrew from the race. Since then, Romney has spent his time traveling the country and giving speeches in preparation for the 2012 Presidential Election. In 2012, Romney proceeded to win the GOP nomination after a sizable victory in the Republican Primaries. In recent months, Romney has taken to the road with his V.P. nominee, Congressman Paul Ryan, in a heated campaign to oust incumbent President Barack Obama.

Romney's political platform focuses mainly on the economy. After a sluggish recovery from the 2008 Recession, most Americans agree that the most important issue at the moment is the growth of our economy. Romney acknowledges that President Obama has put forth his best effort to help grow the economy, though he believes that he can do a better job. Given his long and successful career in both the private and the public sectors, Romney has many achievements that he can point to as proof of his great skills.

Perhaps the most important issue of the economy is job growth. After all, if any one factor accurately reflects the growth of the economy, it is probably the growth of jobs in relation to the population. Over the past four years, President Obama has struggled to repair a crippled economy due to issues that stretch as far back as President Carter. While the economy has started to come back, Romney notes how the past four years have been one of the slowest economic recoveries in U.S. history. Gov. Romney claims that he will be much more effective at creating jobs than our current

President. Mitt Romney's boasts a five-point economic plan that should create 12 million new jobs within four years.

First, he will work towards making America energy independent by taking advantage of ALL of America's resources, not just renewable energy, as President Obama has done. Romney recognizes that the development of renewable energy is essential for a long-term energy solution. However, the key to a short-term energy solution is the development of clean-burning fossil fuels and efficient machines to use them.

Second, he will work towards the improvement of American schools, so that kids are graduating with the skills necessary to get good jobs. From his experiences traveling the country and talking to countless employers, the general consensus was that kids are not graduating from college with any of the skills required by the jobs they seek. Math and science are especially weak in recent years and there is a huge demand for engineers.

Third, he will work towards the expansion of American trade across the world. In addition, he will hold nations such as China accountable when they cheat us in the market. This is especially important because American prosperity has largely been based on our free-market economy. When our trade is restricted, our economy suffers. And when other nations cheat us, they get unfair advantages over us. America needs to reclaim its dominance in the global market.

Fourth, he will champion small business. Romney recognizes that the American economy is not dependant on a few big corporations, but rather many small businesses. One key way to help small businesses is by lowering their taxes. First, Romney claims that the corporate tax rate must be lowered. One of the key factors driving jobs overseas is the unusually high corporate tax rate in America. Second, Romney recognizes, unlike the President, that many small businesses file their taxes as if they were people. As result, a business might be taxed in the upper tax bracket even if the owner is a member of the middle class. Romney also knows that many employers are reluctant to hire at the moment because of the threat posed by Obama-care. In response, he aims to repeal Obama-care and replace it with more practical health care reform. For this reason, it is highly likely that if Romney is elected, the economy will start making a comeback before he is even sworn in because businesses will start hiring again.

Fifth, he will cut the federal budget deficit and balance the budget. In the business world, Romney proved that he can balance budgets. One of his favorite ways to promote his expertise with budgets is to say, "I ran a business for years. In the world of business, if you don't balance you're budget, you go out of business." While President Obama ran in 2008 on the promise that he would cut the federal deficit in half, he actually produced a \$1 trillion dollar deficit four years in a row. Now, as if Americans should believe him any more than they did four years ago, the President claims that he will decrease the federal deficit. Obama

claims that he will do so by taxing the upper class. However, Romney argues that higher taxes on anyone, not just the upper class, will hurt the economy. Romney knows that historically, the revenue in the Federal Reserve has been at its highest when taxes were at the lowest. As a result, Romney wants to cut taxes to all people.

The question then arises, “How can Romney cut taxes and balance the budget?” Romney will do so in two ways. First, he will repeal Obama-care, which will cost the government \$716 billion dollars. In addition, he will close federal tax loopholes, just as he did as Governor of Massachusetts. While he receives criticism from the Democrats for not specifying which loopholes he will close, his past record of doing so is a clear indication that he knows what he is doing.

At the moment, Romney holds a 2-1 advantage over Obama with who citizens trust more with handling the economy. Since the economy is the most important issue of the election, it’s probable that this statistic could be the deciding factor of the election. Coupled with a dominantly-strong performance in the first Presidential Debate, and subsequently strong performances in the second two debates, Gov. Romney’s chances of winning the Election are looking fairly favorable.

Romney has a number of roads by which he can win the Presidency. Ever since the nation saw both candidates on the same stage at the first Presidential Debate, Romney has consistently held the lead in polls for the popular vote. In fact, just a couple of weeks before the Election, he broke the 50% mark in polls for the popular

vote. Many political analysts note that historically, whichever candidate leads in the popular vote this close to the Election generally wins. However, the Presidency is awarded not by the popular vote, but by the Electoral College.

At the moment, President Obama is leading in many of the swing states. As a result, the 2012 Election could be the opposite of the 2000 Election, in that the Republican will win the popular vote but the Democrat will win the electoral vote and the Presidency. However, Romney still has a good chance of winning the electoral vote. As it stands, Romney is likely to win Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia. Obama is likely to win Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Nevada. Colorado is currently a tie, though ties usually go against the incumbent. If all the swing states fall as such, and the remainder of the states fall the way they are leaning, then Romney has two roads to the White House. First, he can win Ohio. Historically, no Republican has won the Presidency without Ohio. However, that is not his only option. Romney can also win either Wisconsin and Iowa OR Wisconsin and New Hampshire. Given how close the race is in those states, the second option is looking more favorable for Gov. Romney.

Interestingly, while the President deals with the impact of Hurricane Sandy, Romney has chosen to spend the last days before the Election campaigning in Pennsylvania and Minnesota- traditionally blue-leaning states. This can be interpreted as either a desperate attempt to open up other doors to victory, or a demonstration that Romney is so confident in victory that

he wants to establish a safety net. Regardless of his motivation, Romney is unlikely to make much head-way in those states. On top of that, polls only give a slight indication of how voters will fall on Election Day. Given the dead-heat of the race, we won't have any true notion of the next President until November 6<sup>th</sup>.



## **Obama's Surprising Lead**

By Andrés Ramos '13

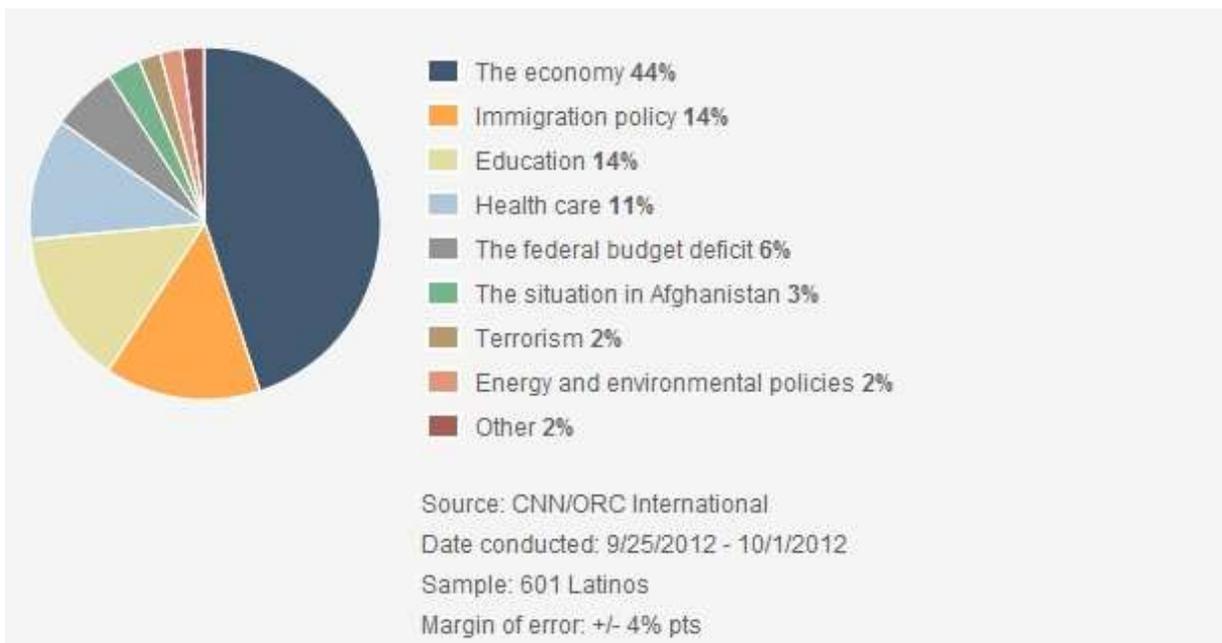
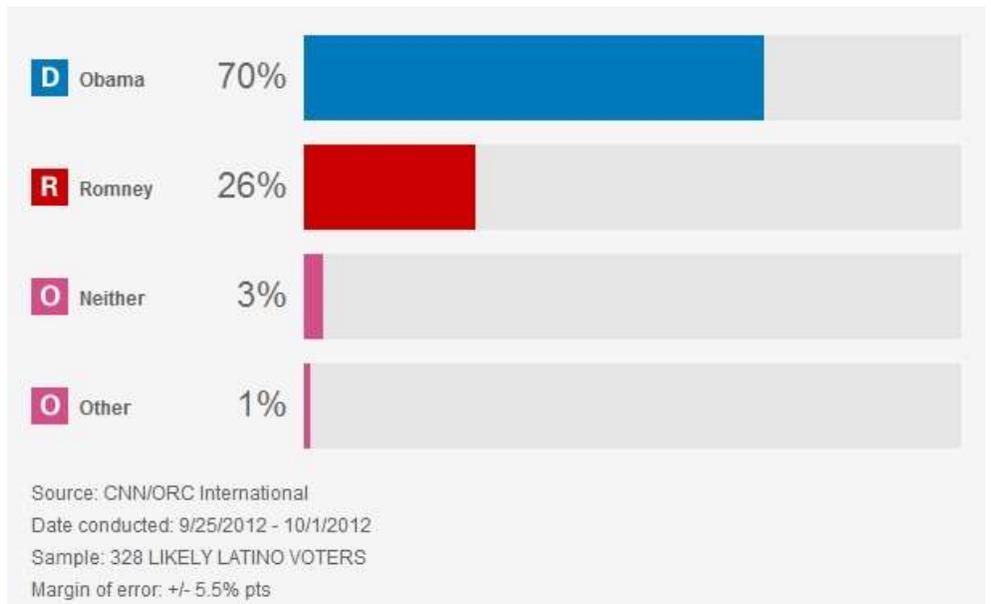
CNN's latest national poll of Latino voters puts President Obama ahead of his challenger former Governor Mitt Romney by an astonishing amount. This poll shows Obama has the support of a whopping 70% of the Latino vote. This surpassed the 67% of Latino votes that Obama enjoyed in the 2008 election. At a first glance, this statistic is surprising and impressive. Yet the first impression of my (Latino) family and I was that it was surprisingly low.

President Obama and the Democratic Party in general have traditionally enjoyed a good amount of support from Latino voters. In the 2004 presidential election John Kerry garnered 53% of the Latino vote. The Latino voting block is overwhelming Democratic today and that is accurately reflected in the 70% figure. Latinos for the most part tend to vote Democratic for their immigration policies and their social spending programs. That being said, Latinos are an ethnically

and culturally diverse voting bloc since they came from different parts of the Americas. They have different concerns and values. For example, some Latino groups are socially conservative because of aspects of their lives such as religion. Another reason some Latinos are in the 30% that do not support President Obama is that the most important issue to them is now the economy, not immigration. The vast majority of Latinos side with the Democratic Party over immigration, but the entire country is split over the economy and Obama's record. It's not a shock that he would lose support over this issue.

Maybe the 70% figure will only strike a few as being low, but there is no denying that a large margin of Latino support could make or break the election. Latinos are the fastest growing minority group in the U.S. Many of them live in swing states such as Colorado, Nevada, Virginia, and the all-important Florida to

boot. As the Latino population in this country grows it will be increasingly important for politicians to gain their support, giving Latinos more power and attention. For the foreseeable future the Latino vote will be able to decide every presidential election.



## The Presidential Debates

By Austin Cantwell '14

The first of three presidential debates resulted in a dominant win for Governor Mitt Romney. In this debate the presidential candidates discussed a variety of topics dealing with domestic issues. Big topics were the economy, unemployment, and health care. Romney continually used President Obama's past four years as president as a way to show that his policies are weak. Romney stated facts about how the unemployment rate has gone down while Obama was in office, and that his plan will



not lead us back to a thriving economy. Obama defended himself saying the situation he inherited was bad, and his policies will bring the economy back, while criticizing Romney's lack of detail in his plans. Romney was clearly more aggressive in his attacks, and capitalized on opportunities. On the other hand, Obama let a lot slide, and did not attack Romney when he could have. In conclusion, this was a clear-cut win for Romney. This performance sparked his campaign again, and has made this election a close one.

The second debate was a town hall style, with undecided voters taking turns

asking the candidates questions.

Unemployment, a constant issue in this election, was very prevalent in this debate. Obama came out swinging this time. He didn't let Romney get away with falsehoods like he did in the last debate. Obama continued to question Romney on his so called "plan" which he has yet to describe. A memorable moment from this debate was when the moderator fact-checked Romney on his comments about Obama's handling of the attack in Benghazi. Obama was contributed a win, but only by a slight margin.

The third debate focused solely on foreign policy. One of the main topics was the attack at in Benghazi. This resulted in a broader argument over U.S. citizen's safety overseas in embassies. Other discussion was about Iran, and their nuclear program and capabilities. Romney argued that Iran is four years closer now under Obama's watch, while Obama defended his stance that Iran still is years away from a nuclear weapon. The candidates shared many views because this topic is really about our safety, not partisan issues. One point where the views split was on our greatest future threat. Obama said terrorism and also the growing superpower China. Romney said the biggest threat would be a nuclear Iran and also China's currency manipulation. Many sources give Obama the slight edge again, due to his knowledge on foreign affairs as president.

These debates sparked Romney's campaign and has made this race as close as it can be. Romney has been on a roll since his first landslide victory, but the progress

has slowed with Obama's strong performances. This race is neck and neck, and it will be interesting to see the final leg to electing our president.

### **Voter I.D. Controversy**

By Jack O'Connell '14

Widespread changes in voter-ID laws have been a recent subject of turmoil between the two major political parties. Voter-ID laws mandate photo ID from all voters on Election Day. States such as Indiana, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Texas have all recently enacted the law. Said laws are being supported by the right and condemned by the left.

Pennsylvania Republican Majority House Leader Mike Turzai, when listing off some of his state's recent progressions, said, "Voter-ID which is gonna allow Mitt Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania, done." However, his fellow Republicans claim voter-ID is being pushed for the mere prevention of fraud in voting. On paper, it

sounds innocent: a party working to stop a problem in voting booths. The potential benefit for the Republicans in voter-ID laws is just a merry coincidence. The perk of these law changes for the Republicans is that they target groups such as African-Americans, the poor, and elderly. All demographics that are more likely to not possess photo ID are also more likely to vote Democrat.

Of course, Democrats label the Republicans' "staged care" for accurate identification as a tactic designed to only help the party in the booths. Democrats contend voter-ID fraud is virtually non-existent. Only a few hundred cases have been reported in the past 10 years. Of course, no study of voter fraud can accurately assess its prevalence because not all are caught. Still, Democrats claim Voter-ID regulations are a form of voter suppression. Because, ultimately, it could

make voting a schlep for those without ID  
hence depressing some votes.

Doesn't this debate humiliate both the left  
and the right? Republicans are feigning  
concern over a negligible problem in order  
to help themselves on Election Day.

Democrats are painting a small precaution at  
the voting booth as an unconstitutional and  
disenfranchising ploy. Democratic outrage is  
coming across as insecurity about whether  
their voters are proactive and passionate  
enough to obtain a photo ID. This just goes  
to show there doesn't have to be one winner  
and one loser in every disagreement.

Sometimes there are two losers both  
adapting their views to fit the party. Good  
thing this isn't true for any other political  
issues.

