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## Strive for success as a voter

Successful is a great word. It effectively conveys what we all strive for, be it career, business, marriage, sports, basically everything in our lives! What a great feeling it is to say, "I have a successful this" or "I'm a successful that." And of course, part of what makes it so great are the benefits that come along with achieving and maintaining success such as happiness, abundance and the respect of others.



Patrick Beaird

**OPINION**

Since we are knee deep in candidates, ads and issues with the Nov. 2 election just around the corner, how about a successful voter? A successful voter is someone who intentionally carries out their civic duty to choose those public servants who will represent the people honestly, run government efficiently and maintain our state with distinction. Now, there is success worth achieving and something near and dear to my own heart as a citizen and activist interested in returning prosperity to Illinois. What about you? Do you consider yourself a successful voter? Do you just show up? Or are you even a voter at all?

Through my own efforts to understand how to reach and then maintain this goal, I've come to some frank conclusions along the way. First, while people around the world risk their very lives for the opportunity to vote, we as citizens of Illinois often do not give this privilege the attention that it deserves. We are ei-

ther ill-prepared when we vote or do not vote at all, both of which, as we can see, are a factor in the ethical and financial mess we find ourselves in today. While we didn't create this mess directly, we also have to acknowledge that we the voters put those of questionable character in office, be it unknowingly.

Second, if we are truly honest with ourselves, we may find that we take our right to vote not only for granted but we may also shortchange, ignore or even label this privilege as a waste of our time. In fact, further self-reflection may generate a host of often petty or weak excuses such as "politics doesn't interest me," "I'm too busy to get more informed" or "I've always voted for this party" just to name a few. Imagine having this attitude about your marriage or career, both of which would certainly suffer if not fail.

OK, enough of the past hindrances. Let's overcome them, turn this thing around and focus on reaching for success. Here are four precepts to strive for while prevailing over your own list of hang-ups.

First, acknowledge the importance of voting. While not fun, participation in the act of choosing those who are to represent us and frugally manage our government is vital as a responsible citizen.

Second, get informed about the races, all the candidates in those races and the issues most important to you. Notice I said ALL the candidates. A clear under-

standing of these elements including all the candidate options will help you pinpoint and wisely choose those candidates, regardless of party, who best represent your convictions and principles. The result of our past ignorance is evident in our government today.

Third, stand by your convictions and principles. If they are truly important to you, now is the time to hold your ground. While compromise is a vital part of our daily lives likely more than we know, be it family matters or work, in the case of choosing leadership it can be dangerous. Some examples include failure to support the candidate we believe would best uphold our principles because they are the underdog or we overlook ethical lapses and financial missteps to obtain or main-

tain party power.

Fourth, share your conclusions respectfully with others. The testimony of your efforts to become informed, your conclusions as

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well as a firm stance based on key convictions can be an example, which spurs others to do the same.

As citizens of Illinois, I hope we all enjoy the benefits of being successful voters in the days to come.

**Patrick Beaird is founder of  
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