

Vote for Change on November 4
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Election Day is right around the corner, the light at the end of a very, very long tunnel.

And as I do every even-numbered year, I'd like to take this chance to remind you to vote. And make sure your friends, family and co-workers join you. Washington claims that each presidential election is the most important in history, but this time I think it's true!

It's no secret which presidential candidate will receive California's 55 electoral votes, so you may think it's not too vital that you cast your ballot. But what better way to ring in a new presidency than with an overwhelming victory in the popular vote? A true mandate, something we haven't seen since Bill Clinton's 8-million-vote victory in 1996.

From Barack Obama, you've heard a lot about change over the past 20 months, and a lot about hope. He has injected an amazing amount of enthusiasm in the political process, engaging groups that normally show little interest. He has preached responsible government, a pretty good message considering the times we're in.

But we've heard a very different message from the White House over the last eight years, a message of the evils of government, how it should keep its hands off the economy and trust the money managers in New York. We're seeing in real time just how flawed that argument is.

At the same time, we've seen an administration that's comfortable with interfering with science, refusing to apply objective knowledge to the problems facing our world. The idea of an endless war, the occupation of a country that drains American coffers and kills its soldiers, became the norm.

It's no wonder so few Americans understand what's going on in Washington, with eight years of mixed messages rattling around.

You need look no further than the current economic crisis for an example of poor policy and terrible communication. The president's Treasury Secretary delivered a three-page plan to Congress on September 20 that would give him unfettered control over \$700 billion of taxpayer money: no strings, no oversight.

But that arrogance was compounded by the refusal-or simple inability-to explain to the American people why a rescue plan was needed in the first place. The administration couldn't understand that it must translate high finance into language the rest of us can understand. How will the life of the average American be affected?

What needed to be explained to the public was the potentially devastating consequences for everyone, not just the financial industry. Lost jobs. Plundered retirement funds. No loans for cars or college tuition, let alone a new house. Farms without credit to plant crops, and businesses unable to stock shelves for the holiday season.

But the opportunity was missed and the rescue plan became the "bailout"; No matter the truth of the matter, once opinion is set, it's hard to dislodge.

Congress tossed the president's plan in the trash. We capped executive salaries. We demanded ownership of banks we save. We ordered the White House to come up with a plan to recover any taxpayer losses. We insisted on foreclosure protection. We wrote an entirely new bill. But the White House didn't understand that the people needed to be convinced.

All Americans deserve a government that will represent them. But even more importantly, Americans deserve a government that will protect the nation, putting the needs of the people ahead of personal and ideological feelings. We deserve a government that knows when to keep its nose out of our personal business and our relationships, but realizes that some things require the steady eye of oversight. We need to rediscover that balance.

The most important action you can take to put us back on track is to vote on November 4. Vote for the presidential candidate you feel will best represent your values. Choose local candidates who will represent your interests. Support propositions that feel right to you and oppose those that trample your rights.

But however you cast your ballot, just do it. And drag along as many others to the polls as possible. That's what makes America strong and keeps us free.