

This election, we're giving you what you really want

I don't know about all of you, but I will be glad when next Wednesday arrives. It will mark the end of the current political season.

Actually, with our new voting machines and the computer-driven results, the current political season will end at about 8:30 or 9 p.m. on Tuesday when the unofficial results are printed out and some folks will celebrate. Others will be disappointed.

But, it will finally be over. No more inane television ads. No more yard signs. No more conjecture and guessing.

But, I digress.

Anyway, before we get to next Tuesday, I wanted to take a moment or two to explain how we are going to cover this election, and why we're going to do what we're going to do.

First, you'll notice that in this week's paper, we have profiles of a number of county-wide candidates.

To ensure fairness and accuracy in the profiles, candidates in each race were asked the same general questions - like "Why should I vote for you?"

Then, most of the candidates were given a question specific to their race or themselves, personally.

I have spent the last six months listening to the political rumblings around the county, and I tried to ask some of the questions that were on everyone's minds.

The candidates' answers are exactly as they were recorded. This, in my mind, leaves no room for editorializing or bias of any sort.

Secondly, you will notice that we have yet to publish the financial statements from the candidates. This is for two reasons.

First, with the election only a week away, one has to ask if it is fair to one candidate or another to tell how much or little the other candidates spent. I don't think so.

Also, the reports that are currently available - of which we have copies - are not up to date. They only show expenses and donation through a few weeks ago. So, at best, they are not accurate.

We will publish that complete report after the election is over and all the counting is done.

Besides, would the fact that Candidate A spent \$1,000 and Candidate B spent \$10,000 sway your vote, anyway?

If so, shame on you.

Now, on to how we're going to cover the actual election.

Over the last quarter-century, I personally have covered everything from local city council and school board races to national contests throughout the country.

off the RECORD

r. michael johnson
editor/publisher



And, there is one thing - if nothing else - that I have learned over the years. The losers are always "disappointed" and think their opponent "did a great job of campaigning;" the winners are always "glad, happy and honored by the voters' confidence."

So, why should we waste our effort and your time simply regurgitating the same quotes you have all read over and over and over again?

I think we shouldn't.

We will not staff the courthouse or the Democrat and Republican headquarters with three or four people on election night.

There is no reason to, other than our own over-inflated sense of self-worth.

What you will get next Wednesday is what I've learned that you're really interested in - who won and by how many votes.

We will also provide - just like we did for the primary election - the complete precinct-by-precinct breakdown of votes cast. That is actually interesting reading, if you're at all into local politics and the political landscape of Greene County.

And, we'll make it so you can get all the information you need at a glance - without having to sort through 500 words of us trying to look politically astute.

One last item I wanted to discuss about the upcoming election and our coverage is photographs.

In some states, it is a law that one cannot take photographs within a polling place. I asked our Greene County elections office to research that law for me recently, and they found that it is, in fact, legal for me to take your picture inside the voting booth.

But, there is one small problem with that.

Aside from having sex and going to the bathroom, I believe that voting is one of the most private things one can do.

And it should be.

So, while you may see a picture of the voters coming into the courthouse, or Bill Sipes counting absentee ballots, you will not see pictures of people voting. I think that's an invasion of their privacy and is deplorable.

If all this means that we sell a few less papers next week, so be it. Sometimes, there are more important things than money.

And, doing what you believe is right is one of them.

(R. Michael Johnson is Editor and Publisher of the Bloomfield Free Press and writes Off the Record as a weekly Opinion Page feature. It appears every Wednesday.)