

News Release

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HARRY BROWNE
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Overcoming the 'snooze factor'

Voters are "tuning out, turning off, and dropping out" of the '96 election, but we can get them back by including provocative 3rd-party candidates

WASHINGTON, DC — What if they gave a presidential election and nobody cared?

That's what's happening in 1996 — and it's going to get worse as long as provocative third-party candidates are locked out of the presidential debates and blacklisted from major media coverage, warned Libertarian candidate Harry Browne.

"Forget the sleaze factor — the biggest political issue this year is the snooze factor," said Browne, considered to be the leading non-billionaire third-party contender for the presidency.

"Politics in 1996 is generating an epidemic of yawns. Listening to Bob Dole and Bill Clinton quibble about how much bigger government should grow is the political equivalent of taking Sominex," he said. "If we don't want even more viewers to ignore the next presidential debate, it's time to stop excluding third-party candidates like Harry Browne and Ross Perot."

The evidence is overwhelming that the policies and personalities of Clinton and Dole are causing voters to tune out in record numbers, said Browne:

■ Only 24% of Americans say they are following the 1996 election closely, compared to 42% in 1992 — and 73% of Americans say they find the presidential campaign dull.

■ The first presidential debate garnered the lowest television rating in 36 years, with fewer than one out of three Americans watching, and the TV audience for the Kemp/Gore debate dropped by almost 50% compared to the 1992 vice presidential debate.

■ An estimated 88 million eligible Americans won't vote this year.

"This election's slogan could be 'Tune out, turn off, and drop out,'" said Browne. "Voters are tuning out of politics, turning off their televisions, and dropping out of the political system.

"Where are the provocative new ideas? The fresh personalities? The innovative policy proposals? The clash of sharply opposing ideologies that could enliven this campaign? They've been locked out, so the American public retaliates by tuning out."

There is a solution, said Browne. "We can reverse this epidemic of political narcolepsy, boost TV ratings for the last presidential debate, and get millions of Americans to start paying attention to politics again," he said. "Just open up the political system to more qualified, interesting candidates — before this nap that American voters are taking becomes a coma."

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