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media uses sound bytes to portray people in a certain light, politicians and political parties will use 'sound bytes' of economic statistics," Broaddrick said. "They can use the numbers...take a small 'sound byte', leave out the other facts, and use them to their advantage."

The nuances in the numbers aren't usually noticed by voters, according to Dobson, and in the past, presidents campaigning for re-election have both fallen prey to that fact and received benefit of it. As for Obama's 2012 campaign, though, the numbers may be in his favor, Dobson said.

"I think there is enough neutral to positive news that [Obama] can use it in a way that helps him," Dobson said. "He can point to the unemployment number, which lowered from 9.7 to 8.2 percent, the fact that we don't have dramatic inflation, and that fact the Dow Jones Industrial average is up dramatically, and say it was because of his policies."

According to Broaddrick, voters have to be aware that the economy takes time to respond to decisions the president makes, and often-times, Americans blame things on or attribute things to the president incorrectly.

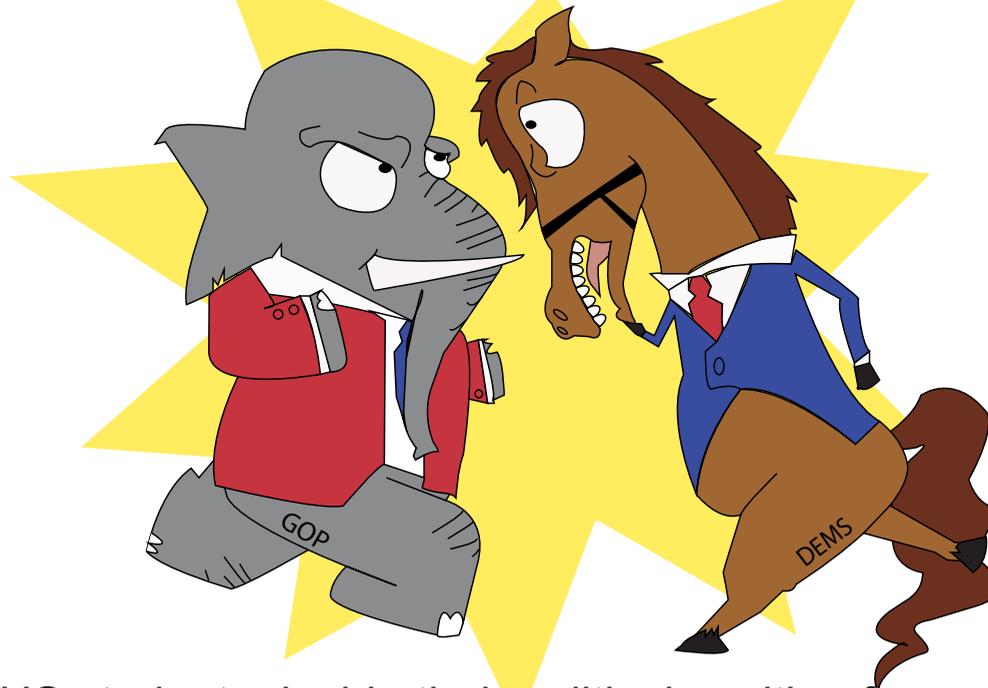
Backscheider said he often sees young voters like himself confused about elections because they don't know how to sort all of the information about candidates out, and then draw their own conclusions based on the facts.

"If you're going to make a vote decision, you can't just make generalizations about what you hear," Backscheider said. "You need to find out for yourself, and know how the person you elect will affect your [future]."

The best way for voters to know the truth about the numbers is to keep informed, the right way, according to Dobson.

"You have to look at multiple media outlets," Dobson said. "Every media outlet has an agenda and a political bend. If you just get your news from one source or the other, you can be slighted on that information. Information can put it out in a way that sounds very compelling. The key: stay as informed as possible with multiple different sources."

CHOOSING SIDES



MHS students decide their political position for upcoming election

Katherine Hansen | Staff Writer

As the 2012 election approaches, establishing firm political standings presses student voters, according to American Government teacher Maria Mueller. Consequentially the race for nomination pushes individual beliefs on current issues into the shadows, according to Mueller.

"Identifying a political view is very important," Mueller said. "Identifying your political stance as in party association, I think, is much less significant."

Junior Usoshi Chatterjee said that being aware is the key to finding personal political views. Avoiding politics ultimately proves the oblivious teen stereotype.

"Teens should be aware of what's going on around them," Chatterjee said. "Otherwise it's the stereotypical teen who doesn't have any idea of what's going on."

According to Mueller, teens tend to avoid politics because it doesn't capture a sense of urgency with them. Yet, she said as a teen is the pivotal moment to get acquainted with politics.

"When you're in high school...it's time to stop and think; I've had all these messages bombarding me and now I'm moving into my own decisions," Mueller said. "Not only what do you want to be when you grow up but what do you believe?"

But, to get to this point takes a desire to find political fulfillment, according to Mueller.

"It takes an active effort," Mueller said. "It's not just something that's going to happen. A healthy democracy requires people making educated, conscious choices."

But, putting in this effort doesn't top the priorities of many teens, according to sophomore Alexis Porter. As teens neglect their political growth, a dependency on the ideals and positions of their parents takes root, according to Porter.

Senior TJ Burich said he maintains a firm Republican position in politics that is derived from his parents' views.

"I'm a Republican, and I chose that because my parents had a big influence on me," Burich said. "I was brought up

that way."

Following in the path of parents' political stances is only natural, according to Mueller, and lingers beyond impressionable teenage years.

"The strengths of [parents'] political identity becomes something that rubs off on you," Mueller said. "They take care of you, you love them, you trust them. Why then would their political views be something you shouldn't trust in?"

As teens follow their parents' views they search for a party label, according to Burich. He said party labels are essentially the initial thought when considering a political identity.

According to Mueller, this false mentality restricts teens in growing their political standings. A sense of little flexibility in political identities traps young voters, according to her.

Another major barrier for teens in valuing political identities is not having a direct connection to the effects of politics. Talk of the economy steers teenage attention away from political awareness according to Burich.

"We're not out in the workplace, so we're not directly affected by the economy as much as our parents are," Burich said. "So, it doesn't directly affect us as much as it would if we were older."

According to Porter, the insignificance of politics at a young age can result in a habit of stagnant political involvement.

"They'll just go along with what everyone else thinks without really expressing their own viewpoints," Porter said.

Not only does teenage lack of value in growing political views lead to mindless following, according to Mueller, it can also come to complete political removal.

"There's this very negative tone [around politics] that isn't very inspirational," Mueller said. "Not having a label is preferred because [teens] don't want to be affiliated."

Facing party restrictions, overbearing parent positions and a lack of political involvement, teens turn to avoiding political exploration, according to Mueller, despite the aftermath.

"Politicians are going to ignore [teens]," Mueller said. "It's a vicious cycle. Young people are the least likely to engage, they also then are the most ignored."