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'Free speech is a human right,' says Liberal MP

By Pete Vere
SooToday.com
Saturday, February 02, 2008



Update: Welcome Mark Steyn readers!

"Freedom of speech is a human right," the MP told me, on the record. He is concerned about Canada's human rights tribunals censoring freedom of expression, the press and religion. He began looking into the issue after a number of his constituents contacted him.

"There is no right not to be offended," the MP said. He also pointed out that Canada already has laws that deal with hate crimes, as well as slander and libel. However, hate crimes and libel are different than merely offensive speech.

The MP wasn't Prime Minister Stephen Harper, or even Conservative. Despite the current high-profile cases against Mark Steyn, Ezra Levant and Alphonse de Valk, the government has been silent.

No, taking the lead in defense of our traditional freedoms was Liberal MP Dr. Keith Martin, a visible minority with a strong record of promoting human rights. It's too bad he's also a minority among MPs when it comes to defending the fundamental right to free expression. Dr. Martin has introduced a private member's motion to repeal the section of the Canadian Human Rights Act that is allowing a quasi-judicial government agency to censor not only the media, but the average Canadian.

"This is a question of freedom of speech," Dr. Martin said. "As a citizen of a free country, I am deeply concerned and disturbed by the fact that the bar of freedom of speech has been moved, quite significantly, in a way that is a serious violation in a serious democracy. People fought through two world wars to give us freedom of speech."

Prime Minister Harper once sounded the alarm against these government commissions acting as political censors? Where is he now? Where's Tony Martin, our local MP, who assured us during the same-sex marriage debate that religious freedoms would be protected?

Both Harper and Martin been silent - Tony, that is, not Keith. As you

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can tell from this 11 minute podcast, Dr. Keith Martin has put forward a principled defense of our democratic freedom. You can download the audio [here](#).

It is said that Canadians have a tin ear for U.S. politics. This is because the U.S. system is so much different than own. This is why a number of readers have asked me to comment on Super Tuesday, which is coming up this Tuesday, and why this day is so important to U.S. politics.

Rather than armchair quarterback, however, I've invited Victor Morton, an experience political journalist from Washington, to comment. As deputy national editor of *The Washington Times*, America's national newspaper, Victor is responsible for editing much of the paper's political coverage. Victor has graciously accepted my invitation to share his "inside the Washington beltway" experience and insights with SooToday.com's readership.

In a 25 minute podcast, Victor answers several political questions I throw his way such as:

- 1 - How does the U.S. primary process work?
- 2 - Why is Super Tuesday so important to the U.S. primary process?
- 3 - Why did John Edwards fail to gain traction as a candidate?
- 4 - What are the differences between Obama and Clinton, and who will emerge victorious between the two come Super Tuesday?
- 5 - Who can stop McCain from winning the Republican nomination?
- 6 - How would McCain fare against Obama in a general election, as opposed to Clinton?

To download the podcast with Victor Morton, please click [here](#)

In case you missed last week's guest column, here is Chippewa County Republican strategist Joel Westrom's analysis of how the primaries work and why Super Tuesday is important:

Brokered convention? Republican presidential field is still wide open

by Joel Westrom

After several state caucuses and primaries a GOP front-runner for president has not emerged. With each state victory a new candidate seems be have the "mojo", but only until the next vote. While a first (or unexpected second) place win gives a candidate a perceived momentum going into the next state, the diversity of the Republican field continues to mix things up. Behind the media accounts, political pundits, and victory speeches lies the real prize, national delegates.

National delegates are the chosen representatives of the Republicans in their respective state. Their job is to vote the wishes of party faithful at the national convention. Assuming national party penalties hold, 2,038 delegates will select the Republican nominee in St. Paul, Minnesota on September 4. A candidate wins the nomination with the "magic" number of 1,191 delegate votes. For most of our lifetime the



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nominee was so clear that the ultimate convention vote was one of a coronation than an election. This time things may be different.

While presently Romney has the delegate lead, Florida's primary on through Super (and this year "Duper") Tuesday and beyond provide the top candidates a wide range of opportunities. Unlike Michigan, Florida delegates are awarded on a statewide winner-takes-all. The means the top vote-getter will win all 57 of Florida's delegates in St Paul. An attractive prize to say the least, plus the momentum to carry on to future states.

A Romney win will give him a sizable lead and give him some breathing room heading into Super Tuesday (February 5).

A McCain win would propel him to the delegate lead putting him and Romney in a head-to-head Super Tuesday slugfest for delegates.

A Giuliani win could give his struggling campaign the needed validity to compete on Feb. 5. On the contrary, a Giuliani loss by a sizable margin will sink his campaign.

The Super Tuesday primary with over a thousand delegates from over 20 states could provide a clear winner for the nomination, but all signs from the latest national polls show no candidate has enough of a lead to secure the nomination. The last state primary is June 7 in Illinois. On June 14, Iowa meets for their state convention which will then determine where their delegates go.

If this trend continues and no candidate can secure the 1191 delegate votes needed to secure their nomination, our national convention will become a brokered convention. Before the era of presidential primaries, conventions were routinely brokered. For the Republican party, 1948 marked the last year a candidate was selected through a brokered convention.

On January 15, Michigan held its primary. While Governor Mitt Romney won the overall state, Senator John McCain won our First Congressional District (which includes Sault Ste. Marie and Chippewa County) by just over 800 votes. Michigan Republicans award the bulk of their national delegates by congressional district.

This process of selecting delegates to the national convention goes from a ceremonial process to a very important decision. Selecting delegates starts in each county at their county conventions on February 7 at 7:30 p.m. state-wide. Counties have to select delegates to State Convention on February 15, where we select our national delegates. The First Congressional District (31 counties) is responsible for sending 3 delegates and 3 alternates to National Convention in Minneapolis in August. The First Congressional delegates, at this point, are committed to voting for McCain.

The only thing we know for sure right now is that the final outcome will be interesting.



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Roxx Responded on 2/1/2008 8:40:10 AM

You know this US election thing is a yawner and a half. Who in the hell in Canada really gives a damned what happens with this whole thing until late next year when the election actually takes place. You might as well give us the inside scoop on the election in Uzebeckistan for all I care. It's bad enough that the Americans tie up thier own news channels for two years with this garbage that I don't think we need to do likewise Pete.

Here's a little tip for you. Stick with Canadian politics. I'm so glad I'm not an American when it comes to thier long drawn out boring political process.

PS: I still can't stand the look, sound or politics of that woman Hillary. I really think she's Bill's homosexual lover and not a woman. Did I say lover? I didn't mean that because I doubt he\she's had sex in years. Maybe that's who Bill meant when he said "I have never had sex with that woman".

PeteVere Responded on 2/1/2008 9:15:51 AM

Actually, Roxx, our American readership is increasing. Additionally, several of our Canadian readers have asked me personally how the U.S. system works, and why does it seem so complicated to an outsider. And among hardcore political junkies (who make up a good part of my readership), a U.S. presidential election with two challengers is the Olympics of election campaigns. So it's a matter of covering the topic for those who are interested, which not everyone is.

Having said that, I recall you mentioning a few months ago that our editorial section lacked a political conservative counter-balance. I found your complaint reasonable. Well the most influential conservative politician of the last thirty years was Ronald Reagan. So who better to provide some counter-balance than an editor of his

Reagan's favorite daily newspaper?

billmurphy Responded on 2/1/2008 9:52:57 AM

Re: the podcast Hey, just what the doctor ordered! I look forward to hearing it soon.

Roxx Responded on 2/1/2008 10:14:07 AM

The "Olympics of election campaigns" or the "Special Olympics of election campaigns" Pete. I'm going to take the latter of the two. It's boring, no one in Canada cares and your American reader's if there really is one never comments. When we have two candidate from seperate parties and they are in an actual election campaign then yeah lets comment. Up to this point it's really just all make believe because nobody has been picked. But hey let's all hear from that lone American reader.

Roxx Responded on 2/1/2008 10:16:50 AM

Actually I'm really surprised Americans would even care about these primary run offs. This stuff really sucks bigtime.

Bill_the_Cat Responded on 2/1/2008 11:14:16 AM

Mr Vere seems to be interested in many forms of political brokerage. Fair play to him.

One thing that has always struck me about our US cousins is the seriousness of their politics. It is a bloodsport pure and simple. Quite fun once one gets into the spirit.

My only qualm (if it can be called that) is the preoccupation with the holder of the Executive. Arguably, the makeup of the House and Senate are far more important. That whole softwood lumber fiasco was largely a product of very well placed lumber interests in some sensitive swing states. Bad for Canada, bad for US retail interests (Home Depot, etc), but even without the support of Bush, the FTC, and various panels, those interests still managed to bog the process down.

Water, as a Canadian interest, will produce as many allies in the US as enemies: it is likely that the Governors/Senators of the Great Lakes states will oppose any effort to siphon water to the US southwest or to keep the Mississippi navigable. They have done so in the past.

Even the retirement of a lone senator can have significant impacts far beyond his/her state. Pete Domenici (R-NM) will not stand for re-election in '08. Because of his advocacy for the science community, his retirement is being talked about overseas (and with no small measure of consternation).

Whilst I normally agree with you Roxx, on this point, I must say you're a tad off.

Yet...if sootoday have a contingent of US readers, perhaps Mr Vere ought to find the local candidates? Give us the local playbook. Who is going to get in the ring against 'Beautiful Bart'?

That would make interesting reading.

And allow Mr Vere to combine a few of his pastimes. Brilliant.

Roxx Responded on 2/1/2008 11:33:45 AM

Bill my only problem with it all is the length of the process. It seems that one election gets over and they're starting the next one. I'm sure there must also be a few Americans that get a little tired of the process also. Last night I watched Hillary and Obama debate the issues. Someone must have told them to cool thier jets on the going for the throat thing because was it boring. They were really talking a matter of semantics and not any difference in policy between the two of them. As one spoke the other nodded his\her head up and down and just then just added a word or two to the practically the same thing.

To me it would draw a lot more attention especially from American voters if they kept the choosing of candidates on the down low until it was a two man\woman race for the Whitehouse. It monopolizes the media for two years this way.

Sam C Responded on 2/1/2008 2:50:15 PM

Roxx... careful with those blanket statements: "...no one in Canada cares..."

I know many people in Canada who care, although aren't perhaps as fervent in their expression as our American neighbours. It may not be a system we participate in, but it IS one which affects us.

It's not that I "care" in terms of being emotionally invested in the outcome of the US electoral process, and it won't necessarily affect my day-to-day life, but in terms of being a "global citizen" I do pay attention to what's happening in other countries.

Keep in mind, the US believes it holds the world-wide franchise on democracy, and expects the world to dance to its tune. For that reason, their political process should concern us all.

New Centurion Responded on 2/1/2008 3:19:34 PM

The Washington Times is America's National Newspaper? I doubt that anyone who isn't: A) A writer or employee with The Times, or B) A Moonie, actually believes that.

Roxx Responded on 2/1/2008 4:00:21 PM

Sam I'm one of the first that respects and has admiration for our American neighbours. More so than our media tries to portray the average Canadian as being. However this political fiasco of a two year non-stop campaign is a little much. I've heard this come from not only other Canadians but Americans as well. The answer is to do what every other country in the free world does. Each party pick a leader and then duke it out for a couple of months until a winner is acheived. Right now the US elections seem to come down to who can out live the other one. No wonder only 60% of the country votes.

Roxx Responded on 2/1/2008 4:09:02 PM

Also Sam the only thing that should "concern us all" is who gets elected in the states. As for any part of that, you as a Canadian have no choice or say in the matter. So tell me what it matters until it is decided. Do you really care what Rudy Guiliani's policy is on say gay rights? Well you might but it won't matter very much will it. Do you really care what Edwards ideas on health care are. Well you might but your going to be pretty lonely on that issue since only you

and Edwards will probably be looking at it from this point on.

As I said earlier they should pick a leader before they drag this out to the public. Actually I believe this is the US media's fault mainly. They really think we care about what the loser in the leadership races policies were. We don't.

PeteVere Responded on 2/1/2008 4:43:40 PM

Bill, there's really not much to analyze with Stupak. He's sorta like David Oraziotti, but on the Michigan side. He pumps enough money into his congressional district to keep getting elected. Additionally, he has good cross-party appeal because of his strong record on veteran's issues as well as law-and-order issues. Remember, he's one of the congressmen who forced Bush to pay injured soldiers their full signing bonus.

So the Republicans keep running the same sacrificial lamb with the same results. It's like a perpetual Oraziotti versus Arbus.

Roxx, the U.S. system is designed to give each party broad input from voters when choosing a leader. It may not turn out that way in practice, but that's how it is suppose to work in theory.

And to a certain extent, it does work in practice. Whereas Svend Robinson once came close to winning the NDP leadership, Dennis Kucinich, despite his popularity among the Democrat's activist wing, has never gained any traction.

PeteVere Responded on 2/1/2008 5:37:00 PM

In order to appease Roxx and provide some Canadian content, I just called up and interviewed a Liberal MP. I will podcast the audio file a little later this evening.

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