

How Bill Lee's primary victory inspires hope in American democracy | Opinion

Ming Wang, Guest Columnist

Published 12:00 p.m. CT Aug. 15, 2018



(Photo: Shelley Mays, Shelley Mays/ The Tennessean)

In the wake of Bill Lee's remarkable and unexpected win against a field of outstanding candidates, we are all wondering how he did it and what we can learn from this experience.

Yes, he is an outsider and a successful businessman who has integrity and faith, but to me, the main reason he won the Republican nomination for governor is that he did not attack others personally during his campaign.

This is shown by the fact that his amazing surge in the polls in the last few weeks correlated with his staying focused on the issues, and resisting the temptation to attack the other candidates.

Our political consultants have told us repeatedly that negative attacks are now the norm, and not attacking puts a candidate at a disadvantage.

While Lee's brave decision not to succumb to this notion is impressive, even more amazing to me is the courage and integrity demonstrated by Tennessee voters, who have shown an appreciation for candidates who focus on the issues.

Civil discourse (<http://civility.tennessean.com>) and the freedom to express one's viewpoint without the fear of being defamed is the foundation of a democratic society.

Some who are born with freedom may not appreciate this, but to me, someone who along with 20 million other youth was kicked out of school during China's Cultural Revolution, facing the devastating fate of deportation and a life sentence of hard labor and poverty, freedom in America is invaluable.

Who most appreciate sight the most? Those who used to be blind.

**August political cartoons from the
USA TODAY NETWORK**

Who appreciate freedom the most? Those who did not have it.

In recent years, watching the lack of civility in public discourse and the frequent vicious personal attacks in political campaigns, I began to wonder if we have taken for granted the freedom our founding fathers and soldiers fought so hard for us to attain.

America is the greatest country on this planet because, while we do have an immigration problem (everyone wants to come here), we do not have an emigration problem (everyone wants to leave).

Why? That is because America has freedom, including freedom of expression.

When I arrived in this country as a student with only \$50, I instantaneously fell in love with America when I heard this quote: "I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to my death your right to say it."

I know it is human nature not to appreciate something we have always had, and to realize its preciousness only after we lose it.

Therefore, the challenge we face today as a nation is this: can we transcend this human weakness and become a people, perhaps for first time in history, who truly appreciates something as precious as freedom without having to lose it?

What Tennessee voters have demonstrated in this Republican gubernatorial primary has given me a refreshing understanding of ourselves, and an exciting hope of a bright future for America.

Dr. Ming Wang, MD, PhD, is the co-founder of the Tennessee Immigrant and Minority Business Group, president of the Tennessee Chinese Chamber of Commerce and director of Wang Vision 3D Cataract & LASIK Center.



Ming Wang (Photo: Submitted)

TOP STORIES

[OxyContin maker: Doctors, patients, drug dealers to blame for opioid epidemic](#)

[Construction workers protest outside JW Marriott for unpaid wages](#)

[What Titans' Taywan Taylor said about shoutout from LeBron James — his favorite athlete](#)

[Titans vs. Bucs observations: Marcus Mariota solid, Blaine Gabbert inconsistent](#)

[See, Titans didn't just sign Dion Lewis to continue Patriots South](#)

Read or Share this story: <https://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/2018/08/15/how-bill-lees-primary-victory-inspires-hope-american-democracy/975884002/>