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Dear Friend:

When it comes to electing Presidents . . .

... The politicians and press don't think you count.

... You may exist, but you don't count.

... You may have strong beliefs, but you don't count.

You may be a well-informed, intelligent, courageous, fair-minded citizen, but you don't count.

The reason they think you don't count is simple. They believe that Presidential candidates are selected by fools, by citizens who believe lies, evasions, half-truths and soft soap.

I simply refuse to believe that. I've based my last act of political faith on your existence. I do believe you count. That you and I can make a difference in this country.

There has been too much talk about numbers and winners and losers, as if this great national contest were merely a horse race and the only ones interested were the handicappers.

It is important to remember that politics is more than just a game of winning and losing. Nor is it merely an exercise in vote-getting for its own sake or a contest of organization and money.

It is, instead, a chance for an honest effort to chart a new course for the nation. And if ever America needed to steer the new course, it is now.

The old ideas, the old politics simply will not do.

What does it matter if an idea is liberal or conservative as long as it really makes sense? Let us not simply tolerate diversity and new ideas -- let us embrace them, let us encourage them, let us aspire to a new openness, a new honesty. Let us travel forward with hope.

If you and enough other concerned, issue-oriented citizens do, we'll make some history together. We'll refute a lot of political nonsense that passes for truth in this country.

According to the conventional and miserable commentary on the ability of Americans to make political decisions, I have committed public suicide because

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