

## Will Secession Find Success?

Erin Maylett

“Petitions to Secede Are Filed for 23 States Since Election” (Richardson), “Illinois Residents Join Secession Petition Trend” (CBS), “Secession Petitions Now Filed for All 50 States” (Stableford): with headlines like these starting a week after a heated presidential election, it’s no wonder that young people are asking, “What is going on, Is that even possible?” Of all the young adults (ages 18-29) that voted in the key battleground states (the states that could turn the tide of the election), 60% voted for Barack Obama (“2012 Voter Support”). It is understood that as Americans we have a voice. We get to participate in elections, such as the presidential election, to make that voice heard. However, the great thing about democracy is you don’t have to wait for one specific day to make that voice heard. What happens in Washington, D.C. affects us all year round. Yes, we elect the officials, and they are there to represent us—to help us be heard—all year round. The petitioning process is just one more way to get it done.



The first amendment of the U.S. Constitution grants us the freedom of religion, speech, press, peaceable assembly, and petitioning the government a redress

of grievances (to read more visit [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html)). That means that since 1791, Americans have had the power to petition their government to effect change. With the technological advancements, it is even easier to do now than it was to do back then. Petitions can be created on the White House website

(<https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/homepage>).

Because there are millions of Americans, significant changes, such as secession from the Union, will not be made on a whim. In order to receive a response from the White House, petitions must accrue 25,000 signatures within 30 days of creation. In most cases, that is a sufficient amount of time to separate serious complaints from the rest. In the recent cases of secession, there has been a lot of response among the people. Less than a week after Obama was declared

victor in the election campaign, Texas had already exceeded the required number of signatures to garner a White House response (Richardson).

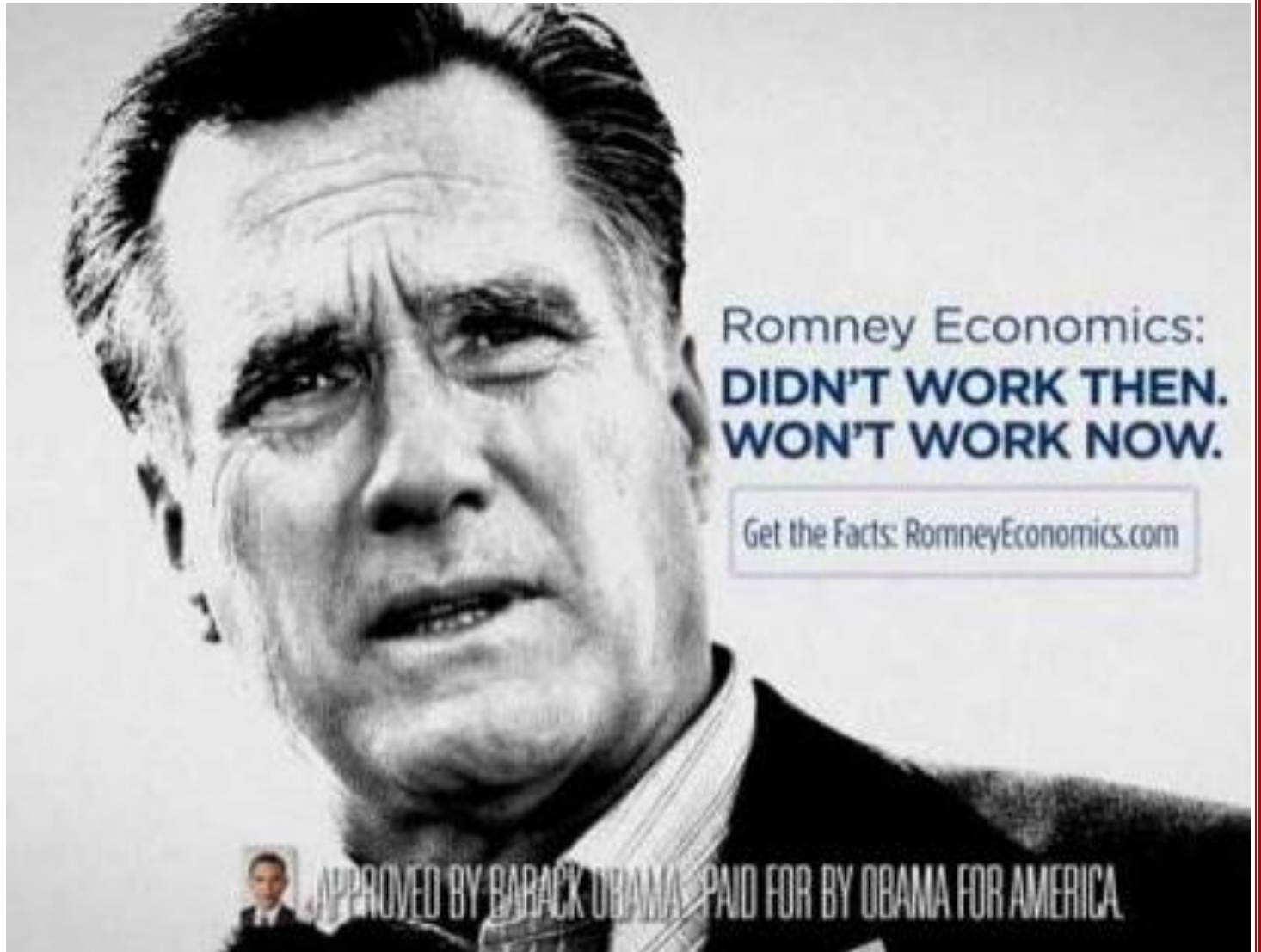
What exactly would the White House be responding to? It’s easy to hitch a ride on the bandwagon and sign just because everyone else is doing it, but a petition needs a foundation. It needs something to back its ideals. At the top of every petition page there

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is a brief stated argument as to why the petition was created. In the case of Texas seceding, it cites the injustice felt in regards to some government agencies and the poor economic situation of the country. Texas believes, because it ranks 15<sup>th</sup> in the world economies, it would be better suited to take care of its people (H).

The questions now stands, will they have success in secession. The answer: no. A Supreme Court case in 1869, after the last significant attempt at secession—the Civil War—“decreed by law what the Union’s Civil War victory had effected by force...that no state may secede from the Union” (“Texas v White”). In other words, short of another Civil War, they will not have success in secession. However, that does not mean that the petitions are in vain. The impact citizens have by creating and signing the petition is so much more than whether or not they succeed in leaving the union. They have shown support around common concerns that the White House will be able to address and work together to rectify.

In politics, it’s not always black and white. It’s a compromise to satisfy the needs of millions of others. With one man as president, it is impossible that he should know the specific expectations and needs of each individual. Through petitioning, we are able to bring those needs to the attention of those we have selected to act on our behalf. When you have a concern that you think others may feel as well, let your voice be heard. Be the change you want to see in the world. Contact your government leaders and make a difference. It’s your right.



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## On a Local Level

Christopher Cunningham

City, village, or town governments make many of the decisions that affect you most directly. Learning how to get involved in making these decisions, though, can be difficult. The following four suggestions can help you make a difference.

- 1) **Learn the issues.** Many of your daily political complaints are the stewardship of the city government. Potholes, zoning, local job options, even things as simple as what color local businesses can be painted are under the jurisdiction of local governments. You probably are already familiar with the city government issues most important to you. But just because a local issue is one you care about, does not mean the local government does. If you are interested in getting involved, and do not already have issues that concern you, learn what's going on. Ask yourself how you want the city to develop over the next several years, or read the local section of the newspaper. If there is a way you want to make a difference, or if you are still looking for issues that interest you, attend a city council meeting.
- 2) **Attend city council meetings.** Most local governments have a council that meets regularly to make decisions. Find when the meeting is held. This information can be found on your city website or at city hall. At city council meetings, you will be able to learn about what issues the city government is currently concerned about. You will also meet like-minded people who want to make a difference in the community. By saying hello and asking questions, you may find there are issues others are passionate about, you find interesting as well. If you have an interest in speaking up at a future city council meeting, pay attention to the personality of the council members. To whom do they respond positively? What types of arguments are those people making? How do they present themselves? If you are ready to make your voice heard, the next step is to speak up at a city council meeting.
- 3) **Speak up.** There are two main reasons to speak up at a city council meeting. The first is if an issue is coming before the city council that you find important, and you have an opinion that you feel they should

consider. Pay attention to the upcoming agendas, and notices in the paper for special sessions devoted to a single issue. Come prepared, often times many people will speak on these issues. You want to sound reasonable and persuasive. The second reason to speak up is if the city council is not even considering an issue you think is important. Many city councils have time dedicated for anyone to speak briefly about any issue. Use this time to present the issue. Even if they do not immediately take action, those who can fix the problem are now thinking about it. In either of these situations, use the information you gathered about the city council members to tailor your remarks to them. If there is an issue of more substance that you wish to discuss, or if your city council does not have an opportunity for open speaking, you will need to get on the agenda.



- 4) **Get on the agenda.** Each city government operates differently, so there is no single way to get on the agenda. The most reliable approach, then, is to ask. When you attend city council meetings, look for who is taking notes or reading the minutes from the last meeting. Most likely, this is the city clerk. After the meeting, approach this person, they should be able to tell you how to get on the agenda.

Attending and speaking up at city council meetings may open up additional opportunities to make a difference in your city. Many cities have citizen councils to provide feedback. You may even get the bug to seek political office yourself. Regardless of the level of participation you want, knowing more about getting involved in local government can help you make a real visible difference.

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# Personal Politics

## My Beliefs, My Party

Megan Harpole

**M**y parents were Republicans. Their friends are Republicans. Everyone I was associated with was Republican. I just assumed that I was one too. It was not until the 2008 Presidential elections that I began to question the assumption of my political beliefs. I decided to take a closer look at the candidates because this was the first election I could vote in. I knew that within a two week span, both Barack Obama and Sarah Palin would be speaking in local assemblies. I decided that this would be a good opportunity for me to listen to both candidates and to determine for myself what I liked and did not like about their stances.

The first speaker was Sarah Palin. Her speech was dry and had reusable jokes that I had heard before from her. She did not speak about policies or issues. Even afterwards, I was still unclear about what McCain's plan for the Second Gulf War, or the war in Iraq, and for the economy. She did not speak once about the issues, but brought up Plumber Joe and a pit bull with lipstick. I did not feel that she would have the maturity or experience that is needed for a Vice President. That night, I had to look up McCain's stance of these issues just to gain a little information.

The second assembly was a speech given by Obama. Just the overall atmosphere was different and from the very first sentence, I was hooked. For the first time, I heard a candidate talk about issue, that not only were important to me, but that I also agreed with. The issue that stood out the most in my mind was that Obama wanted to end the Second Gulf War and to remove our troops from Iraq. My brother was



concerning both candidates and their parties and what I discovered surprised me. Not only did I agree with what Obama was promising, but my own personal beliefs were closer to the Democratic Party than the

stationed in Iraq at the time, and I saw this as the opportunity to bring him home safely.

I did some research

Republican Party. It is important for each person to research the parties without any personal bias. Let your own personal beliefs influence your beliefs and not those around you.

## Family Ties

Christina Leavitt

**M**y dad always listened to the news. He'd cruise the desert roads in his red truck with different commentators voicing their loud opinions. He'd grunt occasionally or make a comment, but I didn't pay too much attention on these drives. As a young kid, I was more interested in my childish fantasies than I was with what was going on between Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. However, that was fine with my dad. The news was a solitary activity for him and he disliked it when people interrupted him with questions if it wasn't on a commercial break.

As a teenager, I became more and more aware of the bigger world outside of my small Idaho town. My dad had



passed away by this time and I had forgotten which stations he'd listened to or which party he'd even belonged to. I felt that if I became politically informed it would somehow bring me just a little bit closer to the man I lost. I felt that way about most things that were important to my dad. My eldest sister had become the proxy dad of our family. She recommended a few conservative news sources for me to listen to. However, the more I listened the more I realized that I didn't fit into any political box. When it came time for me to register I checked the Independent box so I could feel liberated to vote however I saw fit without tying loyalties to any party. Even though I do not belong to the same party as my dad, I choose to be informed, just as he was.

