

Editorial: Flip-flops aren't just shoes anymore

What is a "flip-flop?" Is it a compound word? Yes. Is it an open-toed shoe? Indeed it is. How about one of the most important issues in the upcoming election? Sadly, President George W. Bush's camp has made the answer to this question "yes" as well.

The term "flip-flopping" has been used by President Bush and his supporters to describe his opponent in the November 2 election, John Kerry. They claim that Kerry has changed his mind about so many issues that it is impossible for him to be an effective president. This is interesting, since Kerry has voted along liberal lines 98 percent of the time during his career in the Senate. Regardless of whether these accusations are true or not, it's a shame that such a negative spin has been put on the issue. After all, there used to be a different name for this quality, "flexible leadership."

The main "flip-flop" that Kerry stands accused of deals with the war in Iraq. At first, Kerry voted for the war, but later changed his mind and voted against it. This was due to the fact that a second bill relating to the war contained a stipulation awarding contracts to Halliburton without competitive bidding. This is suspect because Vice-President Dick Cheney was formerly the CEO of the company. Kerry saw this connection as well as the waste of taxpayer money that would result and switched his vote.

How is that a bad thing? Rather than blindly assent to a bill he disagreed with, Kerry took the initiative and fought against it. This doesn't show a lack of decision-making ability, it shows an abundance of it. Holding steady on a course destined for failure results in nothing but failure. Kerry has proven that he has the intelligence to determine which paths these are and the decisiveness to make a change.

President Bush also stands guilty of what he is criticizing others for. During the second debate, Bush was asked about stem-cell research. He said that he opposes its use because of his belief in the sanctity of unborn life. However, he also said that he allowed the use of existing embryonic stem-cells for research purposes while in office. That's a huge contradiction. If you are so vigorously opposed to the destruction of life that creates stem-cells, why would you allow for any research to be conducted utilizing the fruits of such actions?

The answer is that President Bush recognized the incredible healing power that stem-cells could possess. Research utilizing these cells has the potential to result in cures for both AIDS and cancer that would save a tremendous amount of lives. Bush reasoned that since life had already been destroyed to create the existing stem-cells, they might as well be put to good use. This is an example of flexible leadership.

Both candidates have "flip-flopped" at one time or another. In both cases though, you can't fault them for the decisions they made. Each candidate had well-thought-out reasons for changing their mind and the resolve to follow through. So, if you must base your vote on this issue, consider the positive aspects of this quality. Otherwise America could end up on the express highway to disaster.

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Letter to the Editor: Should nice guys finish last in election?

Charlie Brown, Charles Schultz's immortal *Peanuts* character, was earnest, loyal and well meaning. He was also inept at just about everything he ever attempted to do, be it kicking a football or directing the school play. Still, we love him and root for him, and we feel he's on our side.

Our current president experiences a similar juxtaposition of praise and criticism: he is a loyal patriot, but misled us on Iraq; a man of the people, but he's lost more than a million jobs; he's the guy you want at your barbecue, but he screwed up generations-old alliances throughout the world. Polls and editorials indicate that voters prefer Bush's likability and 'one-of-us' persona rather than John Kerry's cold reputation and senatorial speaking style. The problem with this is that George W. Bush often seems like he would rather be at your barbecue than working for you.

Likability is important in a president, but must never take precedence over competence, and our president is simply incompetent. He is unable to present an optimistic, yet realistic, view of the War on Terror or in Iraq. His ties to big business and the wealthy prevent him from ever truly being a friend of the working family, and his base's extreme social conservatism prevents him from being a man of the people, with his marriage amendment looking to restrict the rights of gay Americans, and his stance on stem-cell research restricting the potential of scientific advancement for the sake of his donors in the

religious right.

Loyalty is also important in a president, but not when it's loyalty to faulty intelligence, greedy corporations, a dishonest administration and a short-sighted approach to foreign policy. 'Staying the course' is worthless, and even dangerous, when it's the wrong course.

I believe that George W. Bush does want the best for our country, but he is hindered by his need to dance with those who maintain him. Halliburton, big oil, Saudi Arabia, extreme conservatives and the military-industrial complex are just a few metaphorical "Lucies" who are constantly pulling the football out from this president's best intentions.

For failing to dismiss those interests to do what's right for the American people, George W. Bush must not be re-elected. "Good Man" or not, like Charlie Brown, every thing this president touches turns to dirt. Republicans accuse John Kerry of inconsistency in a vain attempt to win office. These charges are greatly exaggerated, but even if one chooses to accept them, one cannot deny that John Kerry's life and record has reflected thoughtfulness, guts and above all, competence. Maybe you wouldn't have fun with him at your barbecue, but a President Kerry would probably have to decline the invitation anyway. He'll be working.

Rick McKelvey
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