

As we enter a new presidential election cycle, there is no denying that these are highly uncertain times. With hospitals overflowing, the economy collapsing, and US citizens quarantining to prevent the spread of coronavirus, a question is lingering in everyone's minds.

How did we end up here?

The answer is not because of a freak biological event or an unexpected crisis. It is because of a major flaw that has arisen in our democratic process. The process for choosing our leaders has become a media circus fueled by money, growing steadily louder and louder, drowning out the voices of crucial members of our society. We are no longer hearing the voices of healthcare officials, blue-collar workers, and all the other jobs that keep this country running. The current pandemic we find ourselves in could have been prevented if healthcare workers' voices had been listened to. Millions of Americans would not be struggling to make ends meet with three jobs if we had listened to blue-collar workers.

But we didn't. These voices are repeatedly ignored in the election cycle. They are ignored in favor of the sensational that makes the big news headlines. Debates are no longer about policies but rather an hour of candidates' garbled yelling on a stage. The advancement of media in our daily lives has turned elections into a competition of who has the most publicity rather than the best ideas.

This is a difficult problem to fix as it has become ingrained in the election cycle. I believe the first step is to make debate questions more reflective of important issues to the American people. These questions should be topics provided by the crucial demographic that has been consistently ignored in the past. I also believe that presidential cabinet appointees should be discussed or announced before the election so that the American people know where candidates stand on certain issues. This change would force candidates to address these often-neglected issues.

The second solution I suggest is additional education. Nearly every state now has mandatory high school testing, but the testing needs to be updated. Currently, the classes are specifically about how the government is set up and the structure of the three branches. These classes should be expanded to teach students how to look at important topics in an election and not to be caught up in superficial arguments. Every election will have a degree of media frenzy, that's undeniable, but by educating voters about what to look for we can be sure that the important voices and issues are recognized.

Elections are about representing the interest of the people. They need to be influenced by the people who keep this country running instead of being determined by publicity. The flaw in our current democratic system is that we have stopped listening to the voices of the people who run our country day in and day out. They are the crucial demographic of elections and we need to hear their voices.