

I See the Devil

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Lately, we've heard an exorbitant number of proposals that the President needs to pass a cognitive test in order to qualify for service. At the same time, we hear that both Congress and the President should be limited to a certain, and as yet undefined, maximum age. Given the current state of affairs in both Congress and the White House, I can certainly understand what has prompted these suggestions.

Today, however, I had lunch with a friend of mine who happens to be ninety-one years old. Probably because of the election cycle, the conversation eventually turned to the suite of candidates.

I asked, "Who do you like?"

To my surprise, she replied, "Biden."

We had never talked politics before but our mutual circles are heavily conservative in nature, thus leading to my state of surprise. Then as I sat there staring at her, for the conversation had stopped, I saw the devil and his minions.

Let's begin with the obvious demon. If we impose tests and age limits for the President, we must therefore have tests and an age limit for the Vice President, and it must be eight years less than the one selected for President. We must also have the same criteria applied to the Speaker of the House and Cabinet Members, for they are all in the line of Presidential Succession.

The less obvious one is that if age and cognition tests are to be deemed reasonable for these top officials, then it is also reasonable that age and cognition tests are reasonable for voters, like my ninety-one-year-old friend. Despite the fact that such a restriction runs afoul of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment and the laws that prohibit requiring tests in order to secure voting rights, laws and amendments can change.

Finally, I am reminded of the situation in the former Soviet Union, in which people who disagreed with the Party were considered mentally deficient – i.e. failed the cognitive test – and were restricted, or even sent to asylums. The pools of both the candidates and the voters could be reduced in size dramatically and done so by arbitrary standards. And, of course, the question is who decides what the standards of age, cognition, and party affiliation will be.

In sum, the age and cognitive testing is more properly to be done by the voters. One vote at a time. To institutionalize such restraints is an over-reaction to current events for political reasons.

Government by whim is the very face of the Devil himself.