

## **POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS PLAY TO AMERICAN WEAKNESS, SAYS PORTER**

“It is pretty depressing to watch the daily trials and tribulations of American political campaigning,” said independent congressional candidate Dr. Steven Porter. “What we see is an onslaught of vapid comments and meaningless commentary about relatively inconsequential things.” Speaking from his home, Porter, who is vying for Congress in the third district of Pennsylvania, went on to illustrate his point.

“The news—if you want to call it that—continually talks about polls and pundits, about money raised and staffer gaffs, but very little about the in-depth views of the candidates on the critical issues of the day. Perhaps that is because the candidates have no in-depth views. They talk in generalities and sound bytes which the media parrots back.

“But when one looks at the statistics of America today, meaningless sound bytes may be just right for our electorate. I did a little research recently, and here is what I learned.

“America ranks 38<sup>th</sup> in the world on education spending (as a percentage of GDP). We spend 5.7% of our income on schooling—far, far behind countries like Sweden, Israel, Norway, or Denmark. Surprisingly, the nation which spends the greatest percentage of its GDP on schools is—are you ready?—Cuba (18.7%). Our per pupil expenditures on both primary and secondary education are also far behind other nations. We rank 40<sup>th</sup> in total population literacy and have a “high literacy” rate of only 19%. Compare that with Sweden at 35.5%. With fewer than one-in-five American adults capable of understanding a newspaper or deciphering a bus schedule, vapid political sound bytes are probably as deep as our politicians need to go.

“What we seem to be very good at is violence. We rank 6<sup>th</sup> in the world at murder and 4<sup>th</sup> in the world at death by firearms—on par with many of the drug-and-thug nations of South America and Southeast Asia. And of course, we spend more on war and war-related business than every other nation in the world combined.

“Given this profile, ‘tough talk’ and simplistic solutions play well—and you better believe that the savvy politicians and the media know that. Unfortunately, tough talk and simplistic solutions don’t work in the world outside our electorate, and that is probably the reason why guys like George Bush fail so miserably at the art of government.

“Wouldn’t it be nice if campaigns improved their level of thinking and reporting—if just to upgrade the level of the American voter?”

(Statistics from <http://www.nationmaster.com>)