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THE STAND
CANCER AND THE POLITICAL CANDIDATES

Former Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson has cancer.

Thompson will probably be a candidate for the Republican nomination for President election 2008. Should that cancer disqualify Thompson as a candidate, or even more importantly, as President of the United States?

Rudy Giuliani announced candidate for the Republican nomination for President, had prostate cancer. He claims cure. But once cancer strikes, even if it is cured, there is always the possibility and in some cases the probability it will return. Should that disqualify Giuliani from seeking the Republican nomination for President or the Presidency itself?

When cancer strikes, the health of any political candidate is not only his or her business, but well becomes our business as well.

Fred Thompson has what is termed indolent lymphoma. Historically, such lymphoma is incurable but also a highly treatable form of cancer. So much so that Thompson's doctor was able to predict that he would likely live a normal life with a normal lifespan. That is probably true. Even so, if Thompson were elected President, the American people would place a political wager on the fact that Thompson would in fact be well and active, physically and mentally, until January 2013. In short, politically, Thompson would have to live 6 more years free of the ravages of cancer. Should that survival risk disqualify him as a Presidential candidate as some most sincerely think?

And yet another Republican hopeful John McCain has had cancer as well. McCain has benefited from the incredible advances in cancer diagnoses and treatment which exist today. The possibilities for cure or containment are incredible indeed, especially when compared with what existed even 20 years ago. In almost every case, the dreaded word cancer was in so many cases an automatic death sentence, but not so today. The four most prevalent cancers, lung, prostate, colon and breast, have been attacked, and each can be subdued or managed in professional ways hardly ever thought possible.

John Kerry had cancer, and he ran for President and almost won. The wife of John Edwards has a serious form of breast cancer and that would seriously affect John

Edwards if he were President, even though indirectly. The love of a wife dying from cancer would produce psychological cancer in the mind of the politico. There is simply no way to avoid it. Were Hillary Clinton to become the Democratic nominee for President, or the actual President by election, God forbid that she should contract cancer, and especially breast cancer. One never knows where this killer will strike or whom. Polls seem to indicate that a majority of voters would not consider cancer diagnosis past or present as an automatic disqualification for a candidate. That makes good sense because it increases the pool of qualified candidates who may indeed provide the leadership it desperately needs. But it also means that there must be new openness and honesty about a candidate's health. We the people have a right to expect that the person elected to the most important office on earth, our Presidency, is mentally and physically fit to serve. As well, every candidate has the duty to honestly reveal anything and everything about his or her health so that the American people can make an intelligent choice and, with certain candidates, be willing to run the risk of health influenced by something as potentially debilitating as cancer.

Concealment of any material fact should disqualify a candidate. Most of the American people never knew that John F. Kennedy suffered from a debilitating Addison's disease which could have well affected him as President and certainly become a factor if he sought reelection for a second term. That condition should have been revealed.

Recently, Bill Clinton refused to disclose his medical records. The American voters should have held him accountable for that. In 1992, Presidential hopeful Paul Tsongas, who actually won the New Hampshire Primary in 1992, misled voters into thinking that his cancer had not returned. In fact it had, and had he become President, he would have died in office. The American people should demand-require that every candidate perhaps have a current and complete physical, and that the results of that physical, at least in generalities, be made public so that we can know the full health, mentally and physically of any political candidate, especially for the Presidency of the United States.

Health of a candidate also makes it so very important who becomes candidate for Vice President. That man or woman is only a heartbeat away from the actual Presidency itself. Americans concentrate so fully on the Presidency and the President that the Vice President is often an afterthought. For 8 years, Al Gore was a heartbeat away from the Presidency. For 8 more years, Dick Cheney was the man to be President if anything ever happened to George W. Bush. The choice of the Vice President, left to the President, and the health of that candidate should be politically important decisions for the American people, the voters, and not by appointment or private decision making of any party or candidate. This country will survive and thrive so very much on the right people elected and leading. They must be healthy, and nothing, including the dreaded cancer, should prevent them from being able to give their very best, mentally and physically, to the most important job on earth for 4 years. We should watch how candidates like Thompson, McCain and Giuliani run for President. Watch and observe their health, mentally and physically, so that, when November 2008 finally arrives, we can make the right decision about the right person to lead this country, a man or woman healthy and well, mentally and physically capable of giving us their very best.

A healthy America requires the healthy President.