

# In Favor Of Flip-Flopping Politicians

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Friday, 13 March 2009

Politically, it seems to be the kiss of death to be labeled a flip-flopping politician. But is it really such a bad thing?  
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Flip flopping refers to changing ones position on an issue. The public generally dislikes politicians who flip flop on their positions, in part because they assume that it is done dishonestly for political reasons alone, and in part because they simple like to know what a candidate for public office stands for. We, the voters, are left wondering if the politician has any true beliefs, or any integrity.

{bot\_wrgoogle}The problem is that the flip flopping label is applied indiscriminately. If a candidate changes his or her mind for any reason, it is considered a lack of integrity and consistency. But is it always bad when politicians change their positions on the issues? Certainly not. Actually, presidential candidate John McCain just made a statement that was worse than even a disingenuous flip flop on a position.

"I've never changed any of my positions," he proudly told an interviewer. I suppose this was to differentiate himself from other candidates who had changed their minds, but what a terrible thing to be proud of! After several decades on the political scene he boasts because he has learned nothing to change his mind on any issue? Apparently he is convinced that he figured out the whole truth in the seventies.

Think about this. Think about all your opinions from decades back. Do you agree with them all still? Mentally healthy humans grow and mature. Changing one's mind and opinions according what is learned and experienced is a part of this. Sure, some consistency in ones ideas and opinions is normal in a rational person, at least short-term. But never changing one's mind almost certainly indicates a closed mind, and/or an unwillingness to learn.

Consider it as a matter of probabilities. It isn't too likely that there has been nothing new learned or experienced in thirty years that would affect a person's thinking, right? But even if true in the case of McCain, his obvious pride in staying the same is still a problem. Suppose he discovers something new that should make him change a position? In order to keep his "non-flip-flopping" status, will he just ignore it?

By the way, this is not a diatribe against McCain. In fact, early in his career he was one of the most honest men in Washington. Also anyone who has read about his experience of being tortured for five years in a Vietnamese prison - and then forgiving his captors - knows not only how courageous he was, but how intelligent and open-minded he was as well. But he is also the one who made it a point of pride to have never changed his positions.

## I Changed My Mind!

When there is a better policy, or an idea that is more in accord with the truth, any person, including a politician, should choose it right? One's opinions and positions should change once in a while then, if we are capable of learning. Unfortunately, the changing positions we see during election time are usually not honest reassessments, but politically calculated moves.

In the case of honest change, though, there is a scenario I would love to see. Some honest politician (I'm feeling optimistic) is accused of flip flopping on an issue. He had good and honest reasons for the change for good reasons, so instead of defending himself in the usual way, with a tortured logic showing how his position hadn't really change, he says the following:

"It is true that I have changed my position. I looked closely at the issue and I see that there is a better way. Furthermore, I promise to always change my position when this happens. I promise not to stubbornly cling to my opinions or my positions for pride or political points when I see a position that is better for the country or an opinion that more closely follows the facts."

It won't happen any time soon. of course. Such a speech would require an honest politician, and one who is courageous - not a likely combination in our politicians. But maybe the political climate will evolve just enough to allow some honest "flip-flopping" to be acceptable to the voters.

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