

From the RVC:

As I mentioned last month, the national Mensa elections are just around the corner, and in the next few weeks you may encounter all kinds of solicitations urging you to vote for one candidate or another. Now, obviously I hope you'll choose to re-elect me as your Regional Vice Chairman, but that's not really what I want to talk about this month. No, what concerns me is that in Mensa, unlike many other organizations, anyone can put themselves forward as a candidate for any office, whether they have the slightest hint of qualification for that office or not. Mensa, after all, is a three-million-dollar-a-year business, and it just might be important that the running of that business be in the hands of people who know what they are doing.

Too often, though, Mensa political campaigns are just about politics. Candidates tell you what offices they have held in Mensa, and what details of Mensa activities they feel are important, and what they feel their opponents have done wrong in regard to those details, all of which are fine (and probably sufficient in a campaign for local group office), but rarely do we see any discussion in national campaigns of what experience the candidate has in running a multi-million dollar corporation. Make no mistake: American Mensa is a business, not a social club. We have employees, whose financial security depends on the decisions made by the national officers; we have millions of dollars in investments, which must be carefully safeguarded for the benefit of future members, and we make decisions about significant events and purchases that can be highly important to vendors and contractors. Yet the comments made by some of the candidates for national office make it obvious that they can't even read a financial statement.

I'm certainly not saying that it takes a CPA or an MBA to serve on the American Mensa Committee. Many good people have held national office and done outstandingly well without even a college degree. But all other things being equal, some kind of business background will give a national officer a significant advantage over someone who has spent their career as, say, a poet, no matter how sincere and well-intentioned the poet might be. So if you see a letter or email from someone you've never heard of, wanting your vote for a national Mensa office, I hope you'll give some thought to what kind of corporate director that candidate would make, not just to what tax he or she has to grind.

By the way, for the benefit of all those who aren't multi-year or life members, this might be a good time to mention that if you haven't paid your Mensa dues for 2011 yet, your membership expires on March 31. If you want to vote, and I hope that you do, please renew right away!

Now, let's forget about politics and get back to the fun stuff. Don't forget Memorial Day weekend in Houston, where Gulf Coast Mensa will be pulling out all the stops to provide us with another terrific Regional Gathering. Hope to see you there!

Roger Durham

