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October 31, 2012: The Upcoming Presidential Election

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Title: The Upcoming Presidential Election

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10/31/2012—I am a partisan type, so the idea of a possible Romney victory fills me with dread. Yet I have a friend, a perfectly reasonable guy in many ways, who strongly supports Romney out of fear of the mounting deficit. He wants to cut spending. He is not a rich man and is not looking for tax cuts for the wealthy, which would not aid him in particular anyway. My friend's support of Romney reminds me of something reassuring. Why is the election so close? Obama did not do well in the first debate, but that is just one of those things. That would not normally have had so dramatic an effect. Nor has the President campaigned well. No real theme. But again so what? President Clinton was very popular and what was his presidency about? What was the first thing Paul Ryan said when he was picked as the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate? What makes you think the next four years would be any better under President Obama? And how did Clinton put it at the convention—their argument is we made a mess and they have not cleaned it up fast enough. Both Ryan and Clinton were saying the same thing. President Obama has not shown that his administration can get the economy back on track. My view on this is that it has been difficult, more difficult than I expected, to get the economy moving again. And I am positive that the spending cuts, tax cuts proposed by Governor Romney will make everything worse. Plus, unlike my friend, I don't believe the Republican Party wants the deficit to go away. I think all they want is lower taxes for the wealthy. But my point here is that the concern of the electorate that the next four years might not be better is not irrational. It is not the result of Citizens United unleashing corporate economic power. It is a perfectly fair question. So, the weight dragging on President Obama is the one that everyone knew would be a drag—a 7.8% unemployment rate—not the deficit and not anything else. Plus, that rate has not shown consistent improvement, even slow improvement. I am happy to support President Obama because I think he has done reasonably well with the hand he was dealt. I don't know of any other policies that would have done any better and cuts in Europe—Romney's policies—have done much worse. But I can understand how someone else might want to try an alternative. The election issue for the President is not debates or campaign style. I hope things go well next Tuesday. But however they go, the result will not show some fundamental quirk or flaw in the system. No person or mistake will be at fault. It will be a fair outcome either way.