

When asked to choose among multiple options, the politician will pick all of them

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During the run-up to a local election some time ago, the newspaper posed the same set of questions to each of the candidates and published the responses in a grid format so the readers could easily compare them. The candidates agreed on some issues, had opposing positions on others, but the question whose answers struck me was one of the form “If budget cuts forced you to eliminate one of the following four programs, which would you cut?”

- Candidate 1: “I have no intention of letting our budget get into a situation in which this would become an issue. All of these programs are very important to our community, and under my leadership, they will continue to be funded.”
- Candidate 2: “I don’t believe we need to eliminate any of these popular programs. If we review our financial situation, we will find that we can continue to provide for all of them.”
- Candidate 3: “Much as I personally enjoy Program X, it ranks as a lower priority to me than the other options. Program X was originally a community-run program, and I would encourage residents and the business community to step forward and keep alive this program which has greatly benefited our community over the years.”

Notice that the first two candidates, when asked to make a tough decision, opted to make no decision at all. (Compare another election in which the mainstream candidates rated everything as high priority.) The first candidate said, “This would never happen.” The second candidate said, “It’s not happening.” The third candidate is the only one who sat down and made the call to cut one of the programs. The first two were playing politics, afraid to make a decision for fear that it would alienate some portion of the electorate. The third understood the situation and made the hard decision. I voted for the third candidate.

Today is Election Day in the United States. Don’t forget to vote. (Void where prohibited.)

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