

(Continued)

And besides, said Quinnipiac pollster Peter Brown, if voters seem to the political class like they are temperamental or unreasonable, it's sort of beside the point. Americans may change their policy views as they learn more or as events change, or for no good reason at all. But in the end, those views are the only metric in electoral politics that really matters.

"Just because someone's not familiar with something doesn't mean they won't give you their opinion. And just because they don't know a lot about it—their vote still counts as much as someone who does know a lot about it," Brown said.

"In the business of politics, voters are always right. Just like on Wall Street, the market is always right," he said. "You don't fight the market."

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Consider the source and the audience: Alexander Burns writes for *Politico*, a Washington-insider kind of newspaper—read by a who's-who roster of people who make the federal government tick. Why might this somewhat condescending view of the American voter be of interest to such readers?

Lay out the argument, the values, and the assumptions: Burns is not writing an opinion piece, but he certainly seems to be implying that American voters aren't the brightest bulbs around. What does the pollster he quotes mean by saying that the American voter is "stupid"? What would "smart" look like for the analysts quoted here?

Uncover the evidence: Burns cites a lot of inconsistent positions held by Americans. Is that enough to persuade you that voters aren't very smart? What is the defense brought by people like Jones and Matalin? Are there other ways of being smart politically that aren't covered here?

Evaluate the conclusion: Burns implies that American voters hold many contradictory positions that don't rationally fit together, but at the end of his piece he quotes a pollster who says "the voters are always right" in a democratic system, and everyone's votes count the same. What does that mean?

Sort out the political implications: On the whole, is this an optimistic or a pessimistic take on the American system? If we are "stupid," are we doomed?