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## View from here By Michael Quinn Sullivan

# *Elections are important, but life goes on — really*

In the final throes of an election, cries of despair and gloom fill the airwaves as politicians plying for final votes paint increasingly horrific scenes of life without them.

It's impossible, from Labor Day to Election Day in even-numbered years, to watch television, listen to the radio or read the newspaper without being pummeled by an ad, article or talking head urging us to protect the future from the other guy.

If we elect the "wrong" candidates, we are told... Newly uninsured kids will do drugs while moms left unemployed by outsourcing collect welfare as the deadbeat dads bet on the pony races funding schools while the roads deteriorate in the face of global warming, forcing criminals to run amok under the threat of an economy slamming into a wall of asbestos.

Oh, please. The sun will rise. Children will laugh and play. Young lovers will take autumn strolls. New technologies will amaze us. Fortunes will be made. All, generally, with very little help from politicians and their sycophants.

Elections are, of course, quite important. Politicians produce public policy after their own kind: good ones produce good policy, bad produce bad. In the great American experiment, farmers and scholars, executives and laborers, are called upon to separate the political goats and sheep.

The smallest fraction of the population might possibly remember the name of a single state legislator and federal representative who served in 1903. A majority would be hard-pressed to recall who was president or governor in 1904. But all of us know the legacy of two brothers named Orville and Wilbur, and their activities in those years on a stretch of beach known as Kitty Hawk .

Within seven years of the Wright brothers' historic flight, the first reported private air-freight shipment took place — a bolt of silk was flown at the request of a department store from Dayton to Columbus, Ohio , to serve the needs of a customer.

The freedom of the marketplace, not a government program or a politician's promise, created the marvel of air travel.

Similarly, practical history will likely judge the most important event of 2004 to be not an election, but the small group of inventors working with a budget smaller than the rounding errors used by NASA who put a man in space twice in two weeks, in the same craft. A feat not matched by any government.

Driven by the creative forces of the free market, teams around the world competed for a \$10 million privately-funded prize — and a slice of history.

For most of us, the political process is background noise in the business of life.

And that is exactly how it should be. A well-designed concert hall eliminates background noise for a singular purpose: to allow maximum enjoyment of the minute details of a symphony.

The policies we pursue, and therefore the politicians we elect, should be for a similar purpose. The awesome orchestrations that burst forth from a free market occur only in the absence of oppression. The most striking advances in art, science and industry have occurred not in the government labs of totalitarian regimes, but in the bustle of the free market.

Freedom allows individuals to succeed and fail, to explore their creativity and test their boundaries. A recent

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## Elections

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issue of Forbes magazine profiled 26-year-old engineer Simon Luk, a first-generation American. His story is compelling because he is heading a company earning less than \$1 million in sales right now, but is poised to challenge computer industry giants like Cisco and Lucent. Maybe he will wildly fail. But he might just amazingly succeed.

Economic liberty, not political promises and government largesse, makes the dream possible.

The election of 2004 will be soon behind us. But as long as liberty remains our cultural imperative, we will see on the Wednesday after Election Day what we will see tomorrow: a glorious sunrise on the unlimited potential of a new day.

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