

# The 2012 Presidential Election: What Kind of Country Will We Be?

By Jay McAninch, ATA CEO/President

For the 2004 and 2008 elections, I wrote assessments of our presidential candidates based on their voting records and election platforms in three areas: small business, conservation and shooting and hunting. I recommended that industry members support George W. Bush and John McCain, respectively. For 2012, although I believe in dispassionate analysis and factual evaluations, I'm forging my usual detailed assessment and approach to my presidential ticket.

Why? This is an unusual election for me and, by extension, our industry. This is the first time one of the two presidential tickets includes someone I've worked with and know well. I've accumulated 14 years of experience with Paul Ryan, the Republican vice-presidential candidate, which brings a level of understanding unmatched in my career's work with other politicians. Beyond knowing his stance on our issues, I can vouch for his character and priorities – dimensions I might never again be privy to. This personal aspect of my knowledge of Paul Ryan leads me to trust him with our future and, as a result, support the Romney-Ryan ticket.

Congressman Ryan is the first candidate for high office who not only knows the business side of archery and bowhunting, but IS a bowhunter. He can discuss archery and bowhunting equipment in detail. He understands hunting tactics. He's committed to hunting and quality deer management.



The Romney-Ryan team offers a better future for America and particularly for the small businesses in this industry.

He also shoots year-round. On the business side, he has testified to congressional committees and given media interviews to explain the complications of arrow taxes, the impacts of federal excise tax on our industry and the regulatory burdens that hurt our small-business members. We've never before had a politician do so much for archery and bowhunting. He's one of us. Which is why, even if all things were to be equal, I'm recommending you vote for "one of us."

### *Paul Ryan & Our Industry*

I've always believed that in bowhunting and politics, what matters most is what you do when no one is looking. Paul Ryan has always treated our industry with great respect, even when no one knew him or could appreciate his talent and intellect. After he was first elected to Congress, and I was

in my first year at ATA, I told him how important it was for our industry leaders to create a strategic plan to guide efforts to grow archery and bowhunting. When Pete Shepley, Erik Watts, Matt McPherson and about 20 other industry VIPs gathered in Minneapolis in December 2001, Congressman Ryan drove over from Wisconsin to address our "summit." He urged them to work together as a group of small businesses to achieve success for our industry. He talked about his passion for small business and his agenda for getting government out of the way of entrepreneurs. He did all that in part because he is a passionate bowhunter but also because he understands the value in all businesses finding strategies to grow. It's this inclusive commitment to every business and every industry that, collectively, makes the U.S. economy strong.



*Vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan has been a friend to the archery and bowhunting industry since his election to Congress in 1999 at age 28. This year, Congressman Ryan was awarded the position of Chair of the Honorary Board of the Archery Trade Association on June 28 in Washington, DC. Welcoming Ryan into his new position in the industry are Jay McAninch, ATA CEO/President; Ben Summers, TRU Ball Release Products; Scott Shultz, Robinson Outdoor Products; Ryan, Jimmy Primos, Primos Hunting Calls and Greg Easton, Easton Hoyt.*

Later, in 2003-04, in countless meetings and interviews, Congressman Ryan patiently educated members of Congress and the media on how federal excise tax applies to archery products and why it mattered that all products be taxed fairly. We must not forget that many politicians consider fishing, shooting and hunting as “fun” activities and too often they aren’t serious about the business of sporting pursuits. Worse, many won’t go in front of a Congressional Committee or the media to make the business case for outdoor industries. Not Paul Ryan. From the beginning, he realized our industry is a collection of American entrepreneurs (Main Street businesses) and helped people understand that small-business issues apply to businesses within recreation-based industries just as these issues apply to any other industry.

Paul Ryan is also a family man with a strong sense of place. He is proud to live in the town his family has been part of for generations. He’s proud to be part of a family-owned construction business that has been around for years and he’s proud to raise his family a block away from the house where he grew up. Despite his substantial and growing commitments, his sense of home and commitment to family is evident by

the choices he makes. Like most members of Congress, Ryan spends at least three to four days a week working on Capitol Hill. When he’s there, he lives out of his office. He spends the other three to four days in his southeastern Wisconsin district, attending all events expected of U.S. congressmen. Despite that schedule, he is known as a guy who doesn’t travel to events all over the country because he insists on playing a meaningful role in his children’s lives. In fact, despite his love for

archery, Congressman Ryan has never attended our show because it occurs during the two to three weeks he is free during Christmas and the New Year before returning to his work in Congress.

Often, leaders struggle with the challenge of making a difference to improve the lives of many while at the same time being the critical difference in the lives of their own children. This July, I saw firsthand the effort Ryan makes to be a father first. I was at the Reagan Airport in Washington and, as I walked to my gate, I happened to run into Paul and his oldest son Sam. As we greeted each other, Paul asked his son to “shake Mr. McAninch’s hand.” Sam did and, as he did, Paul reminded him to squeeze my hand firmly and look me in the eye and say hello. It was simple — the execution of a polite, respectful greeting with an adult — but it’s a tedious lesson that suggests the commitment to larger principles of instilling confidence and forthrightness. That day, Paul told me he brings each of his kids to Washington for a week during school breaks. In my view, seeing how someone parents his children tells you a lot about what he truly values and demonstrates his approach to leadership at a very basic level.



*Congressman Ryan at 2002 Bow Shoot with, left to right, back row: Congressman Mike Thompson (D-CA); Ryan; Michelle Eichler, Muzzy Products; Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY); Congressman Don Young (R-AK) and former Congressman Jim Gibbons (R-NV). Front row, left to right: Congressman Brian Bilbray (R-CA); TJ Fisher, AAE; Chuck Jordan, Ten Point Crossbows and Pete Shepley, PSE.*



In 2003, Congressman Ryan led the ATA efforts to amend the FET along with Michele Eichler, Muzzy Products and Jim Easton, Easton Hoyt.

### *The Ryan Vision for America*

Despite my level of trust and familiarity with Paul Ryan and his deep support for our industry, the most important reason I support the Romney-Ryan ticket is because Paul's vision for America is the one I want for our industry, my kids and my grandkids.

Ryan believes in personal responsibility vs. government responsibility, in independence vs. dependence and

in success through hard work vs. "success" via government redistribution. The American dream is earned, not gifted. Successful people should be honored and respected, not scorned for their wealth or, worse, considered greedy. If someone acquires assets through his or her labors, the challenge is to emulate his or her accomplishments, not envy them. Our industry is full of people who sacrificed a great deal to build their businesses from scratch. Paul Ryan holds such business owners in high regard and trusts that, as a group, our country's future is in good hands. In contrast, Obama-Biden's vision of government reduces risk, promises government-supported rewards and assures equality through government intervention.

Long before most Americans knew about Paul Ryan, he authored his "Roadmap to America's Future," a detailed plan promoting national prosperity but limiting the government's burden of spending, mandates and regulation. It ensured the opportunity for individuals to fulfill their potential and enjoy the satisfaction of their achievements. It secures the distinctly American legacy of leaving the next generation better off. Ryan's roadmap addressed health care, Medicare, social security and tax reform. It addressed each area in detail as a precursor to legislative action. One of the drivers behind Ryan's roadmap was his

passionate concern for the America he and the rest of us will leave our children if we don't have what President Obama has called "an adult conversation about our financial future."

Today, most Americans have heard something about Ryan's ideas for our future. Unfortunately, most people won't read the actual documents. They trust in others to provide the truth. Just as unfortunately, the demagoguery over this issue is worse than anything I've seen. Those who castigate messengers like Ryan know these are hot-button issues during elections. To their credit and courage, Ryan and Romney remain willing to make the economy and government reform part of the national conversation.

In contrast, no other politician in a leadership position has offered a detailed vision of how America's economy can be reformed to ensure our citizens' futures. Notably, President Obama has failed to deliver a comprehensive plan for the entitlements, taxes and economy. By dismissing credible proposals, critics contribute nothing to the debate and condemn us to a future of managed decline. Absent serious reform, spending on entitlement programs and interest on government debt will consume exponentially more of the federal budget, reduce standards of living and require higher taxes as we try to sustain an ever-growing social-welfare state. Barring substantive changes, the American economy will soon mimic the current European economy — a frightening prospect we must avoid.

### *The Case for Romney*

Now, many will ask, how does support for Paul Ryan justify an endorsement of Mitt Romney? It's a fair question. Many question Romney's appeal to voters and, specifically, his interest in shooting-, hunting- and conservation-based business issues. On issues that foster free trade, fair markets, profitability and professional customer service, Romney gets the nod largely because his business agenda resembles ours. Further, he supports sportsmen despite the fact that he is not a

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McAninch moderates questions for Congressman Paul Ryan at the ATA Board of Directors meeting, June 28.

shooter or hunter and has not been a conservationist or direct supporter of conservation.

Some criticisms of Romney are simply unfair. His success at Bain Capital should be admired, not scorned. The fact that he worked with companies that exported jobs to other countries simply follows a trend in American business that began 20 to 30 years ago. As more companies found the business climate in many states an impediment to profitable operations, they moved all or part of their work elsewhere. Labor-intensive businesses opened facilities in countries in Africa, South America and the Far East. Many of our own industry companies know this trend all too well, including well-recognized camo brands whose clothing manufacturers have shared the frustrations they've felt in trying to keep their businesses in the U.S. An example is Robinson Outdoors, which closed its last U.S. clothing plant 20 years ago.

As for Romney's personal wealth, consider history. Americans who accumulate great wealth have generally formed the core of our country's leadership. There's no greater symbol of that leadership than George Washington. Yet he was one of the wealthiest Americans of his time. He never took a salary for most of his service as our commander-in-chief, neither when leading U.S. troops nor when serving as our first president. In more recent history, John F. Kennedy and Franklin

D. Roosevelt enjoyed great wealth while John Kerry's considerable wealth (personal and through marriage into the Heinz dynasty) was rarely questioned when Kerry campaigned for president in 2004.

This fall, many have expressed concern over Romney's foreign policy experience. Again, it's a fair concern. Yet I find myself comfortable with Romney in this area for a couple of reasons. First, I would argue that his experience is no less than Obama's foreign policy experience was in 2008. I also know that Romney, as an exemplary CEO, will rely on foreign policy experts with no less pedigree than advisors like Condoleezza Rice. More importantly, America's place in the world is predicated on our ability to create and grow assets and opportunity. Our economy drives the world's economy, either directly through American business or indirectly through billions of dollars in aid our government distributes to other countries.

Even our domestic agenda is something the Romney-Ryan administration believes is stymied by the fragile and overburdened U.S. economy. I attended a business roundtable meeting in September where Ryan addressed business leaders. There, Ryan reminded the group that by about 2025, all federal government revenues will be taken by entitlement programs. This looming catastrophic situation means entitlement and tax reform must be our all-consuming focuses if other priorities are to receive meaningful support and attention.

Most importantly, I support Romney because the plan articulated by Paul Ryan to address the country's financial burdens will be a Romney-Ryan administration's first order of business. In the September business meeting, Ryan laid out an aggressive

plan to be implemented during the Romney administration's first year.

That plan calls for Ryan to lead an unprecedented effort to work with Congress to reform taxes and entitlements. Specifically, the plan outlines a reasonable set of accomplishments to be reached by 2013's August congressional recess. Other reforms are planned at prudent intervals over the first two years of a Romney-Ryan administration. The plan's level of success depends largely on its leader; an experienced legislator who has the respect of his peers and knows how to guide the debate needed to craft landmark legislation. The outcome of this focused effort would reset the U.S. economy and put us on track for real, sustained growth driven by the private sector while the public sector provides a safety net.

If you agree that dealing with entitlements and reorienting the role of government in American life is important and you'd like to see action on those fronts in 2013, I suggest you vote for Romney-Ryan and all other candidates who support their plan. Doing nothing about the problems making our economy stagnant is not an option. All the concerns of America's interest groups pale against the need to restore the power of our opportunity-driven economy. A strong economy makes all other things possible. Once that's accomplished, we can again discuss and debate the country's other priorities.

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