Viewpoints

We should focus on a candidate’s knowledge and ability

Mc Cain’s unexpected choice of 46-year old Sarah Palin as his vice presidential nominee is armed squarely at female voters. A few weeks ago, I listened to Joan Hamalty press our African American listener to admit that the only reason the listener suggested Obama was because of his race. Before Mitt Romney abandoned his campaign for the Republican nomination he was forced to give a speech explaining his religious beliefs. Are we living in a time when a candidate's race, religion and gender are more important than their knowledge, experience and perspective? Are voters motivated by the same sentiments I felt I was a 7-year old? Do you simply want your candidates to be a mirror image of themselves.

In 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, regarded as the best candidate ever to run, won by a landslide. In a 1984 book, the author Edward Pessen has dubbed this phenomena “The Log Cabin Myth.” In the current campaign, Republicans have tagged Obama as an elitist because of his Harvard background and “snobbery.”

Democrats contend that McCain is out of touch with the economic problems of the common voter because he can’t recall how many houses he owns. Given the importance of this year’s election, we can hope that voters are able to ignore personal biases and focus upon a candidate’s knowledge and ability.

The presidential election of 1932 could serve as a good example. At the depths of the Great Depression with almost a quarter of the nation’s workforce unemployed, the nation elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a wealthy man surrounded by “dil money” and the privileges associated with wealth.

On a personal level, Roosevelt was very different than the average voter who cast a ballot during the Great Depression. Yet, voters considered him and determined that Roosevelt was their preferred candidate.

We can learn from their example.