

Real World Graduation: Question 32

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Question 32

What charge will cause the greatest amount of fear, anger, and resentment among politicians?

- a) Flip-flopper
- b) Liar
- c) Crook
- d) Ideologue
- e) They are equally afraid of all of the above.

Answer to Question 32

This is a trick question. All of the answers are false.

Answer a) is false because it implies that what he stood for before mattered, and what he stands for now matters, the question being why did he change his mind? "Flip-flopping" is the euphemism that one politician uses against a second one when the second one appears to have changed his policy or views on a certain issue. Politicians usually do not change their mind on policy. They simply appear to be "flip-flopping" because they were actually pandering to different groups. All it means is that he got caught telling opposite stories to different groups of interested citizens on the same subject. No politician cares if you can't keep his opinions straight: you are not a member of the ruling elite. Therefore, it doesn't matter if you think he's changing his mind as necessary to please the audience in front of him.

Answer b) is wrong because being caught in a lie implies that people are paying attention to what was said, even if it is false. Every politician demands to be heard, even if not believed. Politicians now believe that politics is war, and the methods used in war (mainly deception), are all a normal part of the process. No politician cares if you believe him or not: you are not a member of the ruling elite; therefore, it doesn't matter if you think he's a liar.

Answer c) is wrong because it implies that what a politician does, and whether it is legal or not, is important to the politician. It is rare for a politician to be prosecuted for anything, except for making the political class look bad by engaging in the kind of overt corruption that everyone understands. A politician that stuffs cash in his suit coat pockets in the course of taking bribes is certainly in legal trouble because he is acting like a member of the Mafia. But there will be no legal trouble at all if the same cash is deposited in his campaign fund, or in his "Foundation", or "Initiative", or a trust fund, or one of his political action committee funds, where it may be drawn out as desired, all legal. Generally, prosecutors are not interested in prosecuting their friends and allies in government service. No experienced politician is afraid of being prosecuted. You are not a member of the ruling elite; therefore, it doesn't matter if you think he's a crook.

Answer d) is wrong because it implies that politicians take governing philosophy seriously one way or the other. Each politician accuses others of differing viewpoints as "ideologues", implying that the other guy is some sort of extremist. But each politician also regards each citizen as an extremist if they don't agree with the politician's views. No politician cares if you like his view of the legitimate role of government: you are not a member of the ruling elite; therefore, it doesn't matter if you think he's a power-mad crusader.

The correct answer to this question is "being regarded as irrelevant". Politics is the business of acquiring, using, and abusing power. A politician who is regarded as irrelevant can neither gain power, nor use power to change society, nor abuse power for his own benefit. That is their real fear; that is the one thing they are resentful about, and is the one thing that will cause them to explode in anger.