Americans go to voting booths tomorrow to select our new President, a quadrennial exercise in liberty that can mean many things to many people, not the least of which is the incessant bombardment of our senses by newspaper, magazine and Internet articles, television commercials by the thousands and, of course, automated telephone calls advising us as to why we should vote for a particular candidate.

Sometimes there really can be such a thing as information overload.

As the outgoing president of the Boxing Writers Association of America, whose fifth and final term ends on Jan. 1, I have long been a proponent of a quaint and apparently outdated form of politics. I never campaigned for election or reelection, I never made a phone call seeking anyone's support and I never spent a cent getting the word out as to why I should hold the position. My theory, then and now, is that the relatively small number of eligible voters in a BWAA election have the resources, intelligence and wherewithal to learn who is who and what is what, and to cast their ballots accordingly. I have always done what I felt needed to be done, in accordance with the dictates of my conscience, and if a member of the electorate approved, maybe he voted for me. Or maybe not.

Of course, politics being politics, in my unpaid position as figurative leader of the boxing-writing fraternity, I have endured a veritable landslide of snide remarks from those who declined to run for office but were convinced they could do a better job -- and weren't shy about saying so. My decisions have been questioned, my integrity besmirched, my rationale analyzed for some proof of the ulterior motives my detractors are convinced I secretly harbor.

One incident I will always recall involves the time the BWAA's officers and board members voted to present a special award to "Termite" Watkins, a former professional boxer who went to Iraq as a vermin exterminator for the U.S. military and, after the nature of his pugilistic background became more widely known, was asked to serve as coach of the Iraqi Olympic boxing team. Kind of a nice story, or so some of us thought. But one excellent writer, whose work I have always respected, publicly suggested our award was a tacit endorsement of the Bush Administration, without which Mr. Watkins would not have been in Iraq in the first place.

No wonder I have gulped more Motrin than real heads of state, captains of industry and other power brokers whose decisions are of vastly more significance than, say, where the next BWAA Awards Dinner will be held. As I tried to explain to that particular writer, BWAA members come from red states and blue states. They are young and old, male and female, pro-life and pro-choice, Republican and Democrat. All who are qualified for membership are welcomed, and my administration, such as it is, has never forwarded any agenda other than the implementation of measures I believed would help boxing journalism and the boxing industry in general.

But this story is not being authored to detail the headaches attendant to being president of the BWAA. Whomever wins the upcoming election – the candidates are Jack Hirsch and Joe

Santoliquito, whose ardor in pursuing the office is either commendable or foolhardy, depending upon one's point of view – will run his own shop, make his own decisions and, I'm guessing, distance himself from me because that's how the game is played.

What I'm really curious about, at this pivotal moment in our nation's history, is whatever happened to the boxing plank in the platforms of Sen. John McCain and Sen. Barack Obama? Why weren't the ills of the fight game in this country debated at length, and remedies discussed?

My take on elective politics is that some people vote for a certain candidate based on personality – Do they *like* him better than the other person? – while others vote on issues. The driving issue in this election, the pundits keep telling us, is the worsening state of our economy and whether Sen. McCain or Sen. Obama is better equipped to keep Americans reasonably prosperous. We also have heard a lot about national security, race, military commitments abroad and other assorted topics upon which we should deeply deliberate.

But, hey, for all my BWAA-inspired posturing on the need for individuals to arrive at their own conclusions independently, the fact is that everybody around us wants to get into the act. That's why we certify our preferences with yard signs and bumper stickers, as if such displays actually sway our neighbors or strangers we pass on the highway while driving.

Over the course of the last several months, I have received correspondence from the Communications Workers of America (I am a member of The Newspaper Guild, which is affiliated with the CWA) advising me of its endorsement of Obama. A couple of veterans groups (I was in the Marines) have sent letters stating why it is imperative to elect McCain, a former Navy aviator whose courage and devotion to duty were certified during 51⁄2 years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. Everyone from Joe the Plumber to Bruce Springsteen have attempted to influence my vote.

If the election is as close as some say it might be, you'd have to think that the full backing of even a fringe group might make a difference. So how come we haven't heard about the need for pensions for boxers, or restrictions on promotional contracts that can have the effect of making fighters the equivalent of indentured servants?

The seeming likelihood is that, if such a push for unification were being made, boxing would rally behind McCain, a former lightweight boxer at the Naval Academy who co-authored the Professional Boxing Safety Act (it became law on July 1, 1997) and the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act (signed into law on May 26, 2000) with Sen. Richard Bryan (D-Nev.).

"I don't think I can be accused of furthering this cause for political gain," McCain said prior to the 2000 Republican Convention, which was held in Philadelphia. "Unfortunately, most people don't care very much. Boxing reform is not what you'd call a hot-button issue. But public apathy is one of the reasons the sport is in the condition it is, or, at least, was.

"There are some issues that need to be tackled simply because it's the right thing to do. I'm very proud to be involved in the movement to effect some real change in the boxing industry."

But McCain's stump speeches and town-hall meetings around the country have been devoid of boxing talk, which might have had the effect of diluting his support from reform-minded fight fans. Then again, maybe the idea of a truly united front from any partisan group is too much for any candidate to expect.

Longtime former middleweight champion Bernard "The Executioner" Hopkins, for instance, has markedly shifted allegiances over the past eight years. Hopkins, who has been nearly as incessant as McCain in clamoring for boxing reform, in 2000 said McCain should be recognized as the savior of an ailing sport that might have died had he not come along when he did.

"Sen. McCain is a true hero in my eyes," B-Hop said at the time. "I know his history. You have to know who you're dealing with, right? This is a man who was in a prison camp and could have been released early, but he didn't want to leave his friends. That tells me something."

At last look, Hopkins, who had supported Hillary Clinton during the Democratic primaries, had gone over to Obama. In his mind there apparently are bigger fish to fry on the national level than someone diving into the cesspool of pro boxing with a sponge, a brush and a bottle of disinfectant.

Another Obama booster is Vernoca Michael, the African-American owner of the Blue Horizon, the venerated North Philadelphia boxing club. Some weeks ago, Ms. Michael held a "Boxers for Obama" rally at the Blue Horizon. When John Gallagher, an official with the Philly-based Ring One of the Veterans Boxers Association, sought to present McCain with "The Spirit of Boxing," a sculpture crafted by noted artist Carl LeVotch, during a visit by the Republican nominee, Michael refused to allow the use of the Blue Horizon for the ceremonial offering.

So there is no lockstepped support within the boxing industry for any candidate. Really, is that a surprise? In 1960, Sen. Estes Kefauver, decrying the "racketeers and hoodlums that infest professional boxing," headed a committee whose avowed purpose was to clean things up once and for all. The group recommended the formation of a three-person federal boxing commssion to be headed by a czar with far-reaching powers, much as Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, baseball's first commissioner, helped to tidy up that sport following the "Black Sox" scandal that undermined public confidence in the national pastime stemming from the fixed 1919 World Series. But when the TV cameras were turned off, nothing happened.

Federal intervention into boxing again was proposed in 1993 when Sen. William Roth (R-Del.), outraged by the decision that went against one of his constituents, Dave Tiberi, in a bout with IBF middleweight champion James Toney, introduced Senate Bill 2852, which would create a non-profit Professional Boxing Corporation.

"I am convinced that uniform rules and strong investigative powers of a centralized authority are essential if professional boxing is to regain its credibility," Roth said in a prepared statement before hearing two days of open testimony. Again, the TV lights went dark and the heat of the moment swiftly cooled.

True, Sens. McCain and Bryan got some legislation pushed through a few years later, but it was

largely toothless (enforcement was left up to individual states) and lacked a real mandate. Many boxing promoters and members of the 44 state-run athletic commissions that comprise the Association of Boxing Commissioners are opposed to federal oversight, the annual cost of which was recently estimated at $7 million by the *Wall Street Journal*.

It is interesting to note that on Nov. 16, 2005, Republican members of the U.S. House of Representatives, who hold firm to the notion of smaller, less-intrusive government, voted against the McCain-backed formation of a three-person commission within the Commerce Department to regulate boxing in this country by a 183-43 margin. Those free-spending Democrats voted for the proposed legislation, 146-50.

I'm not sure where Obama stands on boxing reform, or if he even gives a tinker's damn. He's more into basketball and, as I understand it, NFL fantasy football. I've seen him shoot southpaw jump shots on TV, which should serve as conclusive proof to his critics that he really is left-leaning.

Whether or not he has the official endorsement of the boxing industry, McCain endeared himself to me, at least a little, with his enthusiasm for a sport that clearly needs friends in lofty places. To my knowledge, he is the only candidate for the highest office in the land to ever make an appearance at the Blue Horizon. He was at ringside for the Butterbean-headlined final "USA Tuesday Night Fights' show there on Aug. 25, 1998.

Maybe that was his way of putting the USA first.