

The Highback Vote

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One Friday night, long before I owned a pass, I had a vision. Just before calling last run on Empire State hardpack, I spouted that someday, snowboarders would no longer be an oppressed minority. We'd shed our ragged image and infiltrate the upper reaches of society. We would run companies, have influence and hold office. By our sheer numbers, we would force change; then we'd finally get some respect.

For better or worse, I called it right. Our ranks have grown exponentially and snowboarding is practiced by a diverse cross section of Americans. Snowboarders do important work, wield massive consumer clout and inhabit the mainstream. We own houses, grow businesses and have kids. In essence, we have been trusted with the keys to the shop. But, it was far beyond my scope to think that, 15 seasons later, I could vote for one of our own to be President.

As a demographic, the snowboard vote has never been courted. We have no PAC, don't funnel cash to 527s and aren't known for sheep-like adherence to a single ideology. We're not soccer moms or NASCAR dads. We don't vote at the rate of retired folk and tend to migrate away from swing states like Iowa, Ohio, and Florida. Our brands don't advocate like Patagonia and we let a Virginia-based ski association claim our clout in its pro-corporate stance. The Burton family did host a dinner with Howard Dean, but unfortunately, they are the active few.

We think more about powder than we do about

polling, and would sooner search for quarter-twenty screws than listen to a political pep rally.

This season, it has become even harder to stay stoked on the election process. Under a banner of patriotism, we have been bombarded with disinformation, divisiveness and irrelevant media sound bites. The defensive reflex is to say all politicians are the same, and we have no real choice. Short of spouting about a stolen election, corporate welfare, the morass in Iraq, an arrogant foreign policy or the Orwellian Patriot Act, I put forth one compelling distinction between the candidates: John Kerry is a snowboarder and George W. Bush is not.

I know John Kerry rides. Unlike the WMD fiasco or the twisted Swift Boat veterans accounts, my intelligence is reliable. Through our Sun Valley operatives, *frequency* has received firsthand intelligence that JFK can strap in with confidence. My second source, CNN, even ran some footage of his slasher style—but everyone knows you can't trust the corporate-owned liberal media. I was still skeptical until the Drudge Report confirmed that he even hiked up 9,000-foot Durrance Peak and got some backcountry turns on the ride down. Willy Cook, photographer for Ketchum's *Mountain Express*, confirmed the report with our editor, that Kerry did in fact force his security detail to post-hole the hill in sub-epic conditions, simply because he wanted to get away, chill at the top, and make a few turns.

Dick Cheney is a jeans skier. I know this for a

fact. Even though he claims local status in Jackson Hole, he purchased his trophy home so the Republican ticket wouldn't officially have two Texans. While I was turning screws in Jackson, he rolled into town with his Secret Service detail, had the ski patrol tail him with portable defibrillators and purchased a pair of gaiters to go with his denim. If this knowledge isn't reason enough to push pause on the Playstation and run to the local polling station, Dubya's touristy Texan brashness should fan the flame for anyone who has weaved through a flock of his fallen brethren on the bunny hill. Swagger may be called walking in Texas, but in Summit County a snowplow is still a snowplow. Knowing that the Commander in Chief's handlers rented him snowshoes on a powder day should serve as the final straw.

Our self-defined subculture has not historically embraced conformity. We think for ourselves and recoil at suggestions to the contrary. However, in this closely contested struggle, voting pro-snowboard is the most important decision you can make this season. More important than where to spend the winter, when to buy your pass or what special-edition bindings to rock with your short board, choosing to vote will make our voices heard and our influence felt. People die for the right to democracy, and unless we participate in the process, we have no right to complain. Besides, who would you rather have running the show, a couple of Texan tourists or a President who can ride? ▲