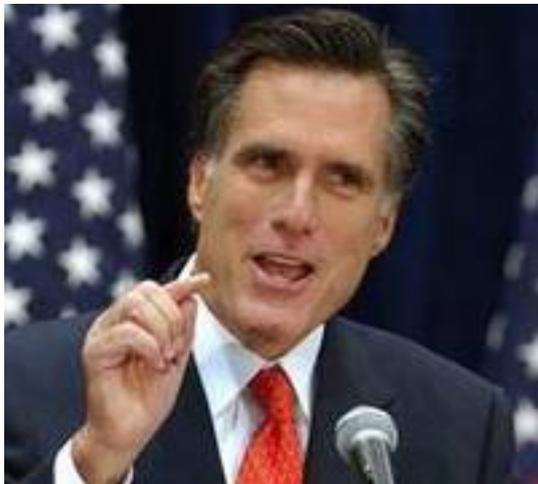


[Atheists are people too](#) [1]

Written by [Steve Bettison](#) [2] | Sunday 16 December 2007



How do you ostracise 30 million people? One simple way is to explain that, "freedom requires religion just as religion requires freedom... freedom and religion endure together, or perish alone." This is what Mitt Romney fundamentally did when he uttered those lines in his speech on the presidency and its relationship to belief. *The Economist* this week [draws attention](#) [3] to the fact that there is a forgotten mass of people within the US who's votes are hardly ever courted.

Currently around 10 percent of Americans class themselves as being agnostic or atheist, a figure that has doubled in ten years. Unfortunately for them though they are a disparate group, and they are increasingly being forgotten. Especially as politicians are becoming more than happy to clothe themselves in religiosity as a way of proving that they are trustworthy and honest. (Even though the innumerable scandals prove that many are ordinary fallible human beings.)

Those who have no religious belief need to join together and begin to ask tough questions of those seeking election to office. There is a rightful place in the political arena for them, especially as a voice against those who seek to hold back scientific advances in the name of religion.

Mitt Romney et al. need to realise, as George Bush did, that even people without faith are Americans and that they, and their views, need to be incorporated into campaigns and politics. Religious belief, or lack of it, should never be a reason for exclusion from the political process. Having said that, we are surely light years away from ever seeing an unbelieving president.

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