

WE THINK

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WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 6, 2008 | PAGE 29

STILL WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?
HERE ARE 5 WAYS

In the months leading up to Super Tuesday, Americans were engaged — dare we say moved — in a way we haven't seen in a generation.

Voters anticipated their day at the polls with glee, not the usual mundane sense of duty or disdain. This time, Americans overwhelmingly felt that their vote mattered. This time, we may actually turn the page.

But now it's Not-So-Super Wednesday.

What to do with all that enthusiasm, all that promise?

Nobody can clean up the big problems of the day in an instant — the faltering economy, the war in Iraq, global warming.

But we can offer a few suggestions on how to make a difference where it might matter most: our own backyard.

Suffering from a Super Tuesday letdown? Consider these antidotes:

Live green

We don't have to wait for politicians to solve the problem of global warming. We can chip away at it in our own lives. Start by ridding your mailbox of all those unwanted catalogs destined to clog our landfills. At www.catalogchoice.org, you can easily remove your name from hundreds of catalog mailing lists.

A few other tips: turn off the water when brushing your teeth; say no to plastic bags, paper takeout napkins and plastic utensils, especially when eating at home, and try comics for wrapping paper. On another Web

site, www.carbonfootprint.com, you can calculate your impact on the environment and learn how to take steps to reduce or offset carbon emissions.

Tutor a kid

Democrat John Edwards made ending poverty a central theme of his candidacy. Inspired by his words? An easy (and fun) way to put that inspiration into action is to tutor or mentor a student. And lucky for us, Dan Bassill, president of Cabrini Connections, a first-rate tutoring program, runs a Web site with a searchable database of up to 350 tutoring and mentoring programs in Chicago and the suburbs. Go to www.tutormentorconnection.org and click on "find a program." If you don't have time to tutor, consider donating your expertise — Web site design, perhaps, or accounting or fund-raising help — to one of these groups.

Volunteer on a political campaign

Never did it before? Now's the time to give it a try. With the Internet and e-mail, it has never been easier. If Barack Obama moves you,

make phone calls for the man, stuff envelopes or raise money. If you feel passionately about ending police and prosecutorial misconduct, vol-

unteer for one of the candidates for Cook County state's attorney. Tired of the stalemate in Springfield?



RICHARD LAURENT—SPECIAL TO THE SUN-TIMES

Scour the storefronts in your district for the campaign office of your local candidate for state representative or senator. Reclaim politics. It doesn't have to be a dirty word.

Support the troops

For the war? Against it? No matter your position, we all want to get behind our soldiers, veterans and their families. Guard and reserve soldiers deployed overseas can take a huge financial hit when they leave their regular jobs. The state of Illinois has set up a fund to help their families make ends meet. To contribute, you can check a box when filing your Illinois income taxes. You also can send a check to the Illinois Military Family Relief Fund, P.O. Box 8889, Springfield, IL 62791. To send a care package, a valentine or a letter to a soldier, contact Operation Support Our Troops Illinois through its Web site, www.osotil.org.

Help an immigrant

Putting your politics on immigration reform aside, it's worth considering ways we can help immigrants assimilate. How about helping a newcomer learn English or prepare for the citizenship test?

Volunteers are welcome at groups such as Centro Romero or Erie Neighborhood House. Better yet, get out of your comfort zone and check out their neighborhood — their food, their language, their customs.

You'll likely find we're far more alike than we are different.