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Weighing in on a candidate's character may affect voter choices during the election.

Letter: Will your principles guide you at the polls?

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The intelligent voters of South Dakota would be wise to consider the example of Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Sen. John Thune, who have condemned the behavior of their party's presidential candidate and called on him to step down. Those two elected officials of a Republican party once known for upholding family values, have put principles of morality and integrity above party affiliation. Sen. Mike Rounds and Rep. Kristi Noem demonstrate a less convincing principled stand: criticize, but still give support for such a lewd and rude immoral candidate. ([S.D. Republicans call for Trump to drop out after lewd comments, Argus Leader/Oct. 8](#)). Principled behavior a la carte was on vivid display after l'affaire Donald Trump recently, when two Republican leaders resolved their conflicted stance about their party's presidential candidate.

Speaker Paul Ryan, after declaring, "I am sickened by what I heard today," regarding the lewd tapes of his presidential nominee, later announced that although he will not defend nor campaign for Trump, he still endorses him for president.

Vice-presidential nominee Mike Pence had first stated that, "As a husband and father, I was offended by the words and actions described by Donald Trump ... I do not condone his remarks and cannot defend them." However, he returned to the campaign trail with the judgment that Trump showed that he "embodies the spirit of America" on the debate stage, after he apologized again for claiming that his fame allowed him a pass to grope women.

This 21st century display of principled behavior recalls that of a priest in the 16th century, who changed his religious affiliation four times – Catholic to Protestant – during the turbulent reigns of Henry VIII to Queen Elizabeth I. When a parishioner asked him, "What kind of principle is that?", the priest responded: "My principle is to stay alive."

And then Tuesday, Senator Thune joined the ranks of the a la carte principle behaviorists when he switched his position again and said he would vote for Trump.

It will be the voters in South Dakota and the nation acting on their own principles who will decide on Nov. 8 who will still be alive in Congress and the White House next year.