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## POSTOPINION

### Speaking Your Piece: A Civic Duty

**O**n Monday, the Republican Party will gather in Tampa, Fla., to hold its 40th national convention, nominating businessman and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney to be our nation's chief executive and Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan to be vice president.

I will proudly serve at that convention as one of 95 Romney-Ryan delegates from the Great State of New York, the birthplace of our nation's *Federalist Papers*. A week later, Democrats from across the nation will meet for their convention in Charlotte, NC, where they will nominate President Obama for re-election. Millions of Americans will tune in to watch each.

Meanwhile, the eyes of the world will be on our national political gatherings, none more keenly than those of people suffering under oppressive regimes around the globe — if they are lucky enough to have access to a TV screen or the Internet.

For all the challenges America faces today, there is no republic on Earth quite like ours, and the whole world knows it. We remain a beacon of freedom to people living in bondage wherever it exists.

I was taught from a young age that involvement in the public discourse is

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a civic duty. Each of us has a right — indeed, a responsibility, at times — to make his or her views known to the larger community in order to better form it as a whole. While we may not always get what we want, the exchange of ideas betters the nation in the process.

That practice has served us well from the First Continental Congress in 1774 to the town hall meeting no doubt held somewhere in America last night. These united states aren't a constitutional republic in name only; the United States is a nation that lives its Constitution daily, providing for vigorous debate from all sides.

The push and pull of American politics isn't always pretty, but it hones us as a country and moves us forward. Sir Winston Churchill famously observed that "no one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other

forms that have been tried." And in that, as in other things, Churchill was right.

One look to flash points around the world instructs us on the fragility of our republic and the need, day in and day out, to actively preserve it from government encroachment. Here we can argue — sometimes fiercely — about the path we are on, but at the end of the day we must remain one, united, just as the Founding Fathers envisioned when they chose *E Pluribus Unum*, "out of many, one," as the motto on our nation's Great Seal.

The 2012 elections may be the most important of my lifetime. Profoundly different political philosophies are competing for our hearts and minds — and our votes.

I have made no secret about which philosophy I support — the one that provides the greatest economic and personal freedom possible. That is why I will proudly raise my hand in support of Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan when the time comes.

In that, I will know I am doing my part.

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