

E-PLURIBUS

Time to play your part.

BY S. R. ALGERNON

---- OFFICIAL SUMMONS ----

Dear Citizen,

Pursuant to the Presidential Leadership Utilizing Representative Individual Brains in Unified Simulation (PLURIBUS) Act, you are hereby given notice of your selection to serve as this district's contribution to the collective leadership of the nation's Executive Branch. Your term of service shall last for **14 days** within the 3 months of **August to October 2048**.

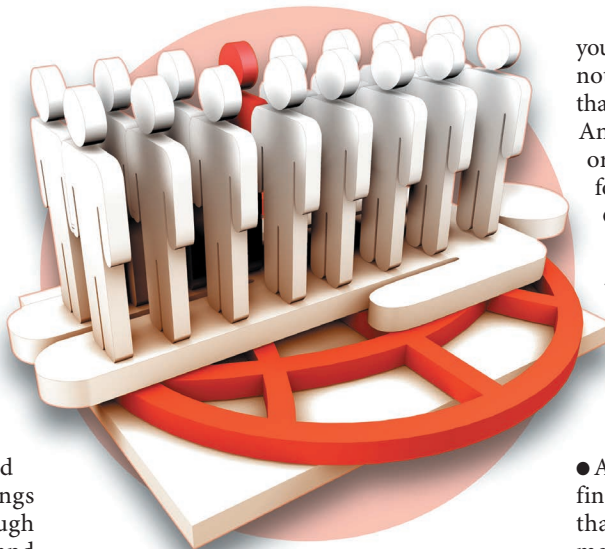
You, along with 99 other registered voters, shall receive redacted briefings on domestic and foreign policy through a secure neural link. Your cognitive and affective responses to world events will inform the simulation's decision-making algorithms. Any thoughts, images or subvocalized speech during the recording period may be picked up by the link and incorporated into executive actions, communiqués to foreign powers and addresses to the nation. The people and their representatives turn to you for guidance and leadership.

If you do not already have neural-interface hardware installed, please report to an authorized implantation centre on or before **15 July 2048**. Alternatively, you may use the attached questionnaire to request a postponement or to be excused from service if:

- 1) You have already served two terms with PLURIBUS.
- 2) Your current residence is five or more light seconds from Earth.
- 3) You have a medical condition that contraindicates neural-link implantation.
- 4) You are under 35 years of age and are not cognitively augmented to a mental age of 35 or greater.
- 5) You are over 70 years of age and are not taking senescence blockers.
- 6) You are currently serving a term with the legislative or judicial simulations.

As you prepare for the start of your term, please keep the following in mind:

● You will not know which 14 days will contribute to the PLURIBUS network. This has been shown to produce more natural decision-making and to reduce anxiety for PLURIBUS contributors.



● Expect some cross-talk from other facets of PLURIBUS, especially in the first few days after implantation. Do not be alarmed. Most people quickly learn to differentiate their own thoughts from the stray thoughts of others.

● We request that you refrain from overly vigorous sexual activity during your term of office. We do our best to filter such things out, but we appreciate any effort you can make to ensure that PLURIBUS is not distracted or disturbed during what might turn out to be a crucial moment.

● Note that PLURIBUS comprises the neural patterns of 100 citizens at any one time. Please advise your friends and relatives not to hold you personally responsible for the nation's foreign or domestic policy.

● The Board of Elections recommends that you inform as few people as possible of your appointment until after your term expires, so that you are not subject to undue influence.

● With regard to the last point, please pay particular attention to conflicts of interest and receipt of gifts from foreign powers.

● During your term of office, it is likely that you will experience newfound historical knowledge, understanding of world events, and appreciation of economics and global trade. This is a normal effect of the neural link and is not a cause for alarm.

● Any sudden preference for tricorones, stovepipe hats or other eccentric headdress is not an effect of the neural link. We have no idea why this occurs.

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● On any particular issue, you may find that PLURIBUS's final decision differs from

your own view, or that your perspective was not adequately considered. Rest assured that PLURIBUS uses the latest algorithms. Any reports you may have read about bias or hacking are speculative and without foundation.

● During your term in office, you may feel overwhelmed by the pressures of the job. Remember that the burden does not rest entirely on your shoulders. You and your 99 other colleagues will depend on each other. It is not like the old days, when we entrusted the leadership of the executive branch to a single, flawed, human being.

● At the end of your term in office, you may find yourself feeling disconnected, or feel that your life no longer has the scope or meaning that it once had. Remember that life goes on after the presidency. Please consult the links at the end of this summons for advice on writing a presidential memoir and for links to several e-book providers that can help you create a personalized presidential library.

● Rarely, some PLURIBUS contributors report feeling that they are in the 'wrong body' or that they were 'switched' upon disengaging from the PLURIBUS network. Regrettably, we can only offer counselling to help you adjust to your new life after your term ends. As you may know, the Supreme Court is deadlocked on this issue. For the time being, we can only legally recognize 'you' on the basis of your corporeal form.

● You are free to use any social media accounts you may possess during your term in office. However, only the PLURIBUS collective has access to the official presidential accounts. Your individual e-mails, blog posts and tweets will not be considered presidential communications, for historical reasons.

As we would with any holder of this high office, we urge you to take the matter seriously and to set aside your own personal interests for the good of the country. You were selected on the basis of a profile derived from millions of ballots. You reflect the collective will of the people. No one person can do it alone; but together, we can — with foresight, wisdom, teamwork and empathy — achieve greatness. ■

S. R. Algernon studied fiction writing and biology, among other things, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He currently lives in Singapore.

ILLUSTRATION BY JACEY