As election season heats up a race already controversial with dividing issues that often turn friends to foes, outcomes highly debated studies on a genetic basis for political affiliation only promise to stir up more division. Scientists and political scientists alike are coming forth to make the connection between our genes, our brains, and ultimately our political ideals. Many scientists now believe that our genes to a certain extent hard-wire our brains to function and accept information in a certain way while the environment we are nurtured in develops our perceptions the rest of the way. While they believe this, they also emphasize the understanding that there is no one gene that influences brain function but hundreds that work together to influence our point of view.

Genes, like that of MAOA which was found in a University of California study to increase the likelihood of voting by 1.3 times, are being found to support the belief that certain characteristics, if not political affiliations are influenced by which genes we are born with. The genes that we are born with dictate in which way we process certain situations or our point of view on issues by indicating which parts of our brain function more than other portions of our brains. By our genes turning on certain parts of our brains we may see lax immigration rules as completely reasonable while someone with a different sequence and different portion of their brain functioning at a high capacity may see the immigration restriction of the foremost importance.

Nevertheless, scientists still see politics like that of schizophrenia, a battle between nature and nurture. While a handful of genes may make a person more likely to see immigration restriction as the appropriate course of action that person, if raised by two parents who did not see immigration
restrictions as a good thing or if they attended a university that took a more liberal stance on the immigration issue, could still see lax immigration laws as acceptable. As John Alford of Rice University says, “Political tendencies are like being left-handed or right-handed -- you're born feeling more natural using one hand or the other, it doesn't mean you can't switch -- for many years lefties were taught to be righties. But it's not easy.” However, some political scientists, like that of Evan Charney of Duke University, believe that there is no proof that our political beliefs are buried in our DNA. When confronted with Alford’s study of twins that found that identical twins were more likely to share political beliefs than fraternal twins, Charney says that nurture, the fact that the identical twins were raised more as a unit than fraternal, gives rise to those results.

Personally, I find that the belief that our genes influence our brains and thus our political point of view seems to make a great amount of sense as that our genes are the basis for everything else about us. Sure things like heart disease and schizophrenia are sometimes based on the way we are raised or the way we live, but often times our genes make us susceptible to these diseases first. If it is possible that our brains are hard-wired to mental illness, or at least the possibility of becoming mentally ill through our DNA, then it would make sense that our brains would again be influenced by our genes when forming our political outlook. Often I would have debates in my political science classrooms and be completely unsympathetic to the opposition’s arguments, yet I felt that they just were looking at the problem/policy/law wrong and not seeing the full picture. Now, I can see that maybe it was not an unwillingness to see from my point of view but possibly a sincere inability due to their genetic makeup. This is both extremely exciting and frightening because it might possibly lead to a greater understanding of the human brain but also might lead to people, either the government or parents, who wish to completely eliminate a sequence of genes that would lead to political dissidence.