

Change: Where to Start

The most effective government lies somewhere between a Republic and a Democracy; where citizens elect political representation but retain democratic power to define laws that can govern the representation they chose. Only in this way will citizens and representatives have power to keep each other in check.

In an ideal republic leaders are always concerned about the public's well being. But we will never live in an ideal republic. Only fifty years after our nation was born, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville introduced an interesting thought, "In aristocratic governments, those who are placed at the head of affairs are rich men, who are desirous only for power. In democracies, statesmen are poor and have their fortunes to make. The consequence is that in aristocratic states the rulers... have little craving for money, while the reverse is the case in democratic nations."¹

I would suggest that it is worse than Tocqueville imagined. Not only is a desire for money apparent in our political system; it is necessary. Let us compare our political process to a high school student government. Usually the chosen student representative is the person who can best get their peers to know and like them. They do this by being friendly, giving out toys or novelty items, and distributing posters and flyers. They then "perform" in an assembly and hope that they are the most entertaining. All of this is done at the student's expense.

Now compare that to the election process. In order to win candidates need to print flyers, distribute posters, hold fundraisers and rallies, use all forms of advertisement, and make public

¹ Tocqueville, Democracy in America, 1831

speeches or debates. All of this costs money: lots of money. In fact, getting elected requires millions of dollars.

If the candidate wins an election he or she is then obligated to represent the people or corporations who donated to the campaign, to them, and/or to their families. The will of the citizens who voted and chose them to rule become second priority. In essence, our system often forces representatives to get bought off in order to win an election.

Want a possible example? Our leaders just signed the America Invents Act. Ironically after they approved the bill they ordered an impact study to determine how the changes will affect America's economy. Why would they sign a bill before investigating the impacts of the change? The answer is simple: money. Many opponents to the bill believe our representatives were bought off by corporations that will use the changes to better monopolize the market.

More and more our freedoms are being limited and taken away. Things like freedom of speech, the right of the people to peaceably to assemble, the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances, and the right to bear arms² are all under attack. Many American's believe that we are not the government's priority anymore. If this is true, it is scary.

So why do we not have proper representation? Tocqueville explains it, "The men who are best fitted to discharge the duties of this high office would have much reserve in their manners, and too much austerity in their principles, for them to be returned by the majority at an election..."³ It is sad that the men and women who are best fit for the job are not the kind of people that our voters require.

² The Bill of Rights, 1791

³ Tocqueville, 1831

So how can we get our voters to require something other than expensive campaigns and bought off politicians? How can we get our representatives to actually represent the people, and not the money that got them elected?

One way is war. “It is incontestable that, in times of danger, a free people display far more energy than any other... When serious dangers threaten the State, the people frequently succeed in selecting the citizens who are the most able to save it. It has been observed that man rarely retains his customary level [complacent state] in very critical circumstances; he rises above or sinks below his usual condition, and the same thing is true of nations.”⁴

The Declaration of Independence says that citizens not only have the right, but the duty to alter or abolish an abusive government⁵. Did you catch that? We are being called upon to replace our corrupt government with a new one. Why haven’t we? Are we afraid? Do we have too much to lose? How can we guarantee a good outcome if we go to war?

War may not be the best answer. After the war we may not even see real liberty and justice come to fruition. War may lead to further confusion and corruption. Tocqueville continues, “Extreme perils sometimes quench the energy of a people instead of stimulating it; they excite without directing its passions; and instead of clearing they confuse its powers of perception.”

We propose a direction that can avoid war. Aristotle stated that “the constitution is in fact the government.”⁶ If we can add two laws to the constitution we may be able to overcome monetary control of government without the need of war. The laws are simple. First: a law prohibiting private donations to politicians and their families. Second: a law restricting the amount of money a candidate can spend on a campaign. We believe that these two laws will not

⁴ Tocqueville, 1831

⁵ Declaration of Independence, 1776

⁶ From the Politics, Aristotle, 340 BCE

only allow politicians to represent the people again, it will force American's to require something other than expensive campaigns during elections.

But what chances do these ideas have at becoming law? Almost zero: Politicians who became so because of big money are not likely to approve a law banning big money. "Is a law proposed concerning private debts? It is a question to which the creditors are parties on one side and the debtors on the other. Justice ought to balance between them. Yet the parties are, and must be, themselves the judges; and the most numerous party, or, in other words, the most powerful faction must be expected to prevail."⁷

"True forms of government are those in which the one, or the few, or the many, govern with a view to the common interest; but governments which rule with a view to the private interest, whether of the one, or of the few, or of the many, are perversions."⁸ This is why the people need a way to control the United States Constitution themselves. This is why a Republic/Democracy hybrid government is the most fair. We need both a republic and democracy to make our government work in the best interest of the people. Only then would there be a true balance of interests, and society as a whole would be better represented and better governed.

John Stuart Mill explained that at some point, the people's expectations of their government changed. "What was now wanted was that the rulers should be identified with the people; that their interest and will should be the interest and will of the nation."⁹ America is waking back up to this idea. We want a just government. We want fair representation. But we must get up off our couches and do something about it. "Once the public interest has ceased to be the principle concern of citizens, once they prefer to serve State with money rather than with

⁷ The Federalist Number Ten

⁸ From the Politics, Aristotle, 340 BCE

⁹ John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, 1859

their persons, the State will approach ruin. Is it necessary to march into combat? They will pay some troops and stay at home. Is it necessary to go to meetings? They will name some deputies and stay at home. Laziness and money leave them with soldiers to enslave their fatherland and representatives to sell it.”¹⁰

I hope we are not so lazy to see such demise. I pray that you, your neighbor, and I, will get up off our back sides and get involved. Only then can we mend this bleeding nation. We can start by petitioning for a Constitutional Amendment that will get big money out of politics. All is not lost. We, as a people, have power to change our constitution without the complete approval of our corrupt leaders. It is called a popular amendment.

“The notion of popular amendment comes from the conceptual framework of the Constitution. Its power derives from the people; it was adopted by the people; it functions at the behest of and for the benefit of the people. Given all this, if the people, as a whole, somehow demanded a change to the Constitution, should not the people be allowed to make such a change? As Wilson noted in 1787, ‘... the people may change the constitutions whenever and however they please. This is a right of which no positive institution can ever deprive them.’” 11

Popular Amendment has been performed on the state level more than once. Regardless if you were for or against it, California’s Proposition 8 is a good example. The actual citizens of California decided what was in their Constitution. They did not need corrupt representatives to agree on law.

We, as a nation, don’t need to wait for our corrupt congress to outlaw monetary control of our lives. Start a petition in your city, your state. Let’s get a national bill, a Constitutional Amendment, in which the American Citizens themselves, through popular amendment, can get money out of politics. We can save this great nation before it is too late. Let’s get moving in the right direction.

¹⁰ The Social Contract, Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1763

¹¹ <http://www.usconstitution.net/constam.html>