

The United States has enjoyed a prolonged democracy thanks to divided rule: three equal institutions: Administration, Congress, and Supreme Court. Each of these institutions have problematic periods in our history, but rarely at the same time. Today, all three need considerable reform if our government is to continue to be a beacon to the world.

Presidency.

The election system for president is suffering from a poorly performing Primary Election system. Our first president, George Washington, was selected by the educated elites, unanimously, who recognized General George Washington as the new country's most outstanding citizen: a man who demonstrated good judgement, courage, and no desire for permanent power.

He set the tone of citizen-president by calling himself "Mister President," not Your Highness, or other British terms of royalty. He satisfied himself with only two terms of four-years each in office, returning to his plantation, like the ancient Roman Cincinnatus, appointed temporary dictator, who returned to his farm when the emergency was over. This was a one-time model of patriotism rather than political ambition.

The rest of our presidents were less unselfish, but we bumbled through with a few great leaders and many mediocre ones, and only two or three really bad ones. We had two other institutions besides the presidency to govern us.

Congress

Congress has a much more checkered history, flawed from the start by our founders not trusting to majority rule. They feared populism, and devised a senate (like the Roman senate) to cool populist fervor. The problem was this was not democratic. It gave equal power to two senators from each state, regardless of population size, which greatly diminished our one-man-one-vote ideals.

Even the House of Representatives, our more democratic institution, suffered from power of only White men, depriving women and slaves (of course) from participation in governance until almost two centuries later. The differences among the states was also a problem.

Some states had populations more educated and urban, while others were more rural, conservative, and less educated. This problem was behind the great schism, the Civil War, over the issue of slavery, our original sin. But even after that war, our democracy was damaged by the undue and undemocratic nature of rural America, which still plagues us.

Supreme Court

Our judicial system is presided over by a Supreme Court, whose membership number has varied from five to nine members, appointed by elected presidents. Beneath the Supreme Court is a range of federal courts, members appointed by presidents and confirmed by Congress. In addition are State Courts, modeled after the federal court system, but only as good as the states themselves.

The entire American democracy is dependent on this separation of powers, and hope that a Supreme Court will be above partisan considerations. The first Court failure was under President Andrew Jackson, who deliberately disobeyed the Court order to cease his genocide of Native Americans. Next was the Court's terrible decision to back a Congressional law about returning runaway slaves to their masters, just before the Civil War broke out.

After decades of respect for a well-functioning Supreme Court, the Court is now grossly out of balance and exceedingly partisan. Their worst decisions have unduly empowered dark money (Citizens United), deciding a presidential election---giving power to a candidate without popular mandate, ending a ban on weapons of war in favor of the badly understood second amendment, and cancelling a half-century old protection of women's privacy and rights to abortion.

Added to this are the actions of one justice, Clarence Thomas, who is boldly corrupt, bought and paid for by a partisan billionaire. Unfortunately, he is not the only one. Several have wives receiving unsavory money.

All American courts, other than the Supreme Court, have ethics codes and bad behavior by judges have removed them by impeachment or resignation. The Supreme Court does not have such an ethics code, or any system of accountability.

We now have our three major institutions badly in need of a new constitutional convention to fix them all. Our government is designed to reform slowly, but it eventually comes through for us, if we care enough.

684 words

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