“Free Market Democracy: Opportunity, Choice, & Representation for Every Group & Every Voter”

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ABSTRACT

We must consider the principles that define a truly democratic government. First, the rights of all citizens can only be safeguarded by entrusting power to a truly representative council that must reach a consensus in order to pass legislation. To form such a council, every citizen must have an equal and effective vote. To be effective, the election system must offer voters a wide range of viable candidates nominated by many different groups throughout society. Finally, every vote cast in the election must be translated into the same amount of power in the council. Therefore, the power of each delegate must be based on the number of votes that they received.

In any system based on single-member geographic districts, the candidate who receives more votes than any of his/her opponents is then “trusted” to fairly represent every person in the entire district, including those who campaigned and voted against them. To make matters worse, politicians draw these district lines not to ensure representation but to ensure their re-election and to favor their party. This system almost always restricts a voter's choice to a maximum of two viable candidates, thus encouraging the formation of a two-party system. Third parties are almost never viable alternatives to the two major parties, which maintain a stranglehold on power. Seldom does our vote really count simply because we have very little real choice.

Legislation by simple 1/2 majority rule is a time-honored tradition, but we must admit that it often allows a slight majority in the House (and/or Senate) to assume complete control and disregard the views of any and all opposition. Requiring a 3/4 majority to pass a bill easily avoids this tyranny. Legislators would be forced to reach a consensus before any action is taken. Of course, consensus is difficult to achieve in a two-party system, where most campaigns consist of attacking the candidate of the opposite party.

Free Market Democracy (FMD) is a new election system that eliminates districts and simple-majority rule and fulfills these basic principles of democracy. It offers every significant group the opportunity to nominate a viable candidate. It offers every voter real choice and equal control over government. It promises positive, issue-oriented campaigns. It forms small, efficient councils that accurately represent every voter and it forces lawmakers to reach a consensus.

The election process is quite simple. To form a ten-seat council, a list of the largest groups in the community is compiled. These are informed about the council and asked if they would nominate a candidate and an alternate. Other groups that express a desire to nominate are also added to the list. An advertising campaign educates the public about the council and encourages voters to register with one of these groups. After a deadline, the fifteen groups with the most registered voters are announced and a ballot is posted.
listing them and their nominees as the official candidates. A booklet is published containing the ballot and profile sheets submitted by each of the candidates, in random order. Common forums, such as debates, are organized to provide all candidate equal opportunities to speak.

Voters rank six of the fifteen candidates on the ballot in order of preference since five will be eliminated. First, votes are counted by the 1st choice on the ballot. Then, the candidate with the least votes surrenders them to be redistributed to the other candidates by the next choice on the ballot. This continues until the eleventh candidate is eliminated and the ten delegates of the council remain. Some votes may change hands several times, but only as the voters desire. Every voter is represented by a delegate of his/her choice and delegates receive all the votes due them.

To make each vote count equally, the power of the delegates are "weighted." Instead of each casting one vote in the council, delegates cast the number of votes they received in the election. Therefore, the council is a precise mirror of the community. To ensure "the consent of the governed," a 3/4 majority is required to pass a bill. Any group of delegates representing 1/4 of voters can veto a bill. No law should exist if one in every four voters disagree with it. In larger councils, FMD can also be used to form committees that expedite reaching a consensus.

This is participatory democracy. Citizens organize groups, register voters, nominate, and elect delegates whose power depends on each vote. Decisions in the council are determined by the delegates' exact voting strength. Voters are equally represented, whether their delegate holds ten votes or ten thousand. Delegates look for guidance to the members of their groups and are forced to build consensus to be effective lawmakers. To speed its implementation, powerless advisory councils can be formed on any level to monitor the current government and make public recommendations. Once voters become familiar with the system, they could phase out the old and simply empower the new council.

We need to insist on a Free Market Democracy ... to make government effective, efficient, responsible, and simply... democratic.

INTRODUCTION

If government does not faithfully represent the people, do we have democracy? If large groups in society cannot nominate a viable candidate, do we have open elections? If votes have no real choice, do we have freedom?

Every vibrant economy is based upon a free and open marketplace. In it, every consumer can buy goods and services from dozens of different businesses, choosing between those who are large or small, close by or far away, old or new, cheap or expensive. Yet, do we voluntarily limit our most important choice to two, or even one, option? Yet, that is exactly how we choose our leaders! We silently submit to an election system that restricts our choices to two candidates and most of the time only one of them has any real chance of winning.

The Wall Street Journal says, "...only 30 of the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives will even be competitive ... more than 20% of the entire House had no major party challenger...10 of the 21 Florida House incumbents ran unopposed..." Then, after we make our choice, only those of us who have chosen the most popular candidate

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get our choice! The rest of us walk away "empty-handed" and unrepresented! We shake
our heads and moan that it can't be changed, but we are much too intelligent to allow this
to continue.
Miles Rapoport, of Demos, made this comment, "Elections ... are the method by which
we confer Power -- real, decision-making power -- to people who then make judgments
for each of the other 364 days of the year, that affect our lives deeply... Elections matter,
and we ought to make them the absolute best they can be... the first responsibility lies
with those in public life in one way or another to make the system as responsive and
accessible as possible. People will respond to the invitation to meaningfully participate,
and will rightly not bother with structures that are rigged and unresponsive. I want to
work to change the system -- and I fundamentally believe it will make a huge difference." We
can change our election system. We can choose our leaders in a free and open
marketplace of ideas and personalities. But, first we must examine it, see its basic flaws,
and reject its restrictions on our political lives.
We must consider the principles that define a truly democratic government. First, the
rights of all citizens can only be safeguarded by entrusting power to a truly representative
council that must reach a consensus in order to pass legislation. To form such a council,
every citizen must have an equal and effective vote. To be effective, the election system
must offer voters a wide range of viable candidates nominated by many different groups
throughout society. Finally, every vote cast in the election must be translated into the
same amount of power in the council. Therefore, the power of each delegate must be
based on the number of votes that they received.
As we saw in 2000, our current election system violates all of these principles. Our
government does not represent us. It does not safeguard the rights of all citizens or offer
us an equal and effective vote. It certainly does not offer us any real degree of choice in
who will represent us. Our government polarizes society and allows a "tyranny of the
majority," even when that majority is razor thin. This "tyranny" is based on election by
geographic districts and legislation by simple majority rule.
The main problem with our government is that it does not represent us. The majority is
greatly over-represented (along with those who use their wealth to influence them). All
other groups are greatly under-represented. Statistics on most issues are difficult to
define, but to prove the point, consider race and gender.
According to the 2000 census, African-Americans make up 12.8% of the American
population. Hispanics make up 11.9% of the population. Women make up roughly 51%
of the population. Yet, of the 435 seats in the US House of Representatives, African-
Americans currently hold 38 seats (8.8%), Hispanics hold 20 seats (4.6%), and women
hold 59 seats (13.6%). In the US Senate, there are no African-Americans, no Hispanic-
Americans and only thirteen women. In the entire history of the US Senate, only five
Asian-Americans, four African-Americans, three Hispanic-Americans, three Native-
Americans, and thirty-one women have ever served. Throughout our history, these
under-represented groups have been left largely unprotected by our government and have
often been persecuted due to their lack of influence in government.
In any system based on single-member geographic districts, the candidate who receives
more votes than any of his/her opponents is then "trusted" to fairly represent every person
in the entire district, including those who campaigned and voted against them. To make

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Legislation by simple 1/2 majority rule is a time-honored tradition, but we must admit that it often allows a small majoriy in the House (and/or Senate) to assume complete control and disregard the views of any and all opposition. Requiring a 3/4 majority to pass a bill easily avoids this tyranny. Legislators would be forced to reach a consensus before any action is taken. Of course, consensus is difficult to achieve in a two-party system, where most campaigns consist of attacking the candidate of the opposite party.

Free Market Democracy (FMD) is a new election system that eliminates districts and simple-majority rule and fulfills these basic principles of democracy. It offers every significant group the opportunity to nominate a viable candidate. It offers every voter real choice and equal control over government. It promises positive, issue-oriented campaigns. It forms small, efficient councils that accurately represent every voter and it forces lawmakers to reach a consensus.

Governments make the most important, far-reaching, and life-changing decisions of all human organizations. National and even local leaders direct a vast array of resources, but often fail to safeguard the rights and welfare of their people. Even in prosperous, "democratic" societies, minorities are often denied adequate representation in government and must fight to avoid discrimination. Any group that is under-represented suffers at the hand of government. Hundreds of private organizations and millions of people around the world spend billions of dollars and man-hours fighting hunger, disease, racism, oppression, environmental destruction, and war. However, the decisions of governments can quickly erase years of effort and progress or supply resources to combat these ills far beyond most private efforts.

Over the last few years several films have been released which portray the horrors of WWII. That maestrom of pain, suffering, destruction, and death occurred because a few dictators were allowed to seize the reins of power. Could it have been avoided? Could it happen again? In the last few years we have seen Yugoslavia split into warring factions, Russia struggling to function within a democratic system, and Nigeria hoping to overcome a long history of military rule. Rebels in Mexico, Columbia, Peru, and Sri Lanka fight the government, which they consider illegitimate. We support rebels in one conflict and the government in another only to find that "our" side has committed atrocities or squandered millions of dollars worth of aid.

Foreign nationals look at the scandal, corruption, and confusion in western, "democratic" nations and often conclude that democracy has no great redeeming virtue. Should we offer to implement an American-style election system in the struggling nations of the third world or the former Soviet bloc? Is some form of proportional representation better? What makes a government "legitimate"? What makes a government "democratic"? Governments are truly legitimate and democratic only when they have the proven support of an overwhelming majority of their constituents while providing effective protection for the rights of every significant minority group. No current democratic system reaches this level of legitimacy. For the servicemen who have

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defended democracy in the past, for those who defend it today, and for the victims of oppression both at home and abroad, we must use an election system that provides legitimate, democratic government. The future of our nation and of our world is at stake. The most effective strategy to improve the welfare of men, women and children throughout the world is to implement an election system that forms governments based on the principles of democracy. There is a inverse relationship between the amount of power placed in the hands of a single individual (i.e. mayor, county judge, governor, president, king, dictator...) and the representative, democratic character of that government. Therefore, we should focus on systems that invest power in a fully representative council, assembly, or legislature. If an executive is needed, he/she should be appointed by and answerable to the council. Every nation, state and local community has the right and the responsibility to examine, alter and even abolish their current government and institute new government that is truly democratic. We should seek to develop and implement a system of government that is simple and provides high voter involvement, a large choice of candidates, an assembly that exactly mirrors the community with precise representation of every conceivable minority group, protection for minority rights, and the incentive to govern based on a broad consensus.

The principles of democracy are clearly expressed in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

Government that is truly democratic exists for one purpose: to ensure that certain rights are applied equally to all its citizens. It must afford every citizen an equal amount of control over government by entrusting power to an assembly that accurately represents society. It must carefully establish the right to vote for every citizen over a minimum age and provide for the effective use of this right by offering a wide variety of viable candidates. It must enable any group in society to nominate and elect delegates to the assembly without great difficulty or expenditure. It must ensure that the assembly accurately represents every significant group. It must exercise authority only when it has obtained "the consent of the governed," not just a bare majority. Finally, it should be relatively small to limit the cost of its administration.

Free Market Democracy (FMD) is a new election system that fulfills these principles. It gives every voter an equal amount of control over government. The council delegates are chosen in an at-large election from a very large number of viable, official candidates. The council is small, yet accurately represents every significant minority group in society. It forces lawmakers to negotiate, compromise and reach a true consensus of all voters. At first glance it may seem complicated, but compared to our current system with its bicameral legislature, re-districting, primaries, Electoral College, and campaign financing regulations, it is a very simple.

The nomination process is designed to produce a manageable number of official candidates but allow every significant group to participate. First, groups register their

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desire to nominate and an election commission publishes a list. Individuals then register to vote with one of these groups. (A voter's registration remains with a group in subsequent election cycles unless he/she decides to change it.) Following a deadline, the election commission announces the groups with the most registered voters. A pre-set number of these groups (twice the number of council seats) are then allowed to nominate a candidate and a running mate (who serves as a vice-delegate to represent the group whenever the delegate is absent). For example, to fill a 10-seat council, the top 20 groups are allowed to nominate. To fill a 50-seat council, voters choose from 100 candidates nominated by the 100 largest groups in the community, the smallest of which might represent less than 0.1% of registered voters.

Voters rank one-half plus one of the candidates in their order of preference. For example, to elect a ten-seat council, voters rank eleven of the twenty candidates as their 1st choice through to their 11th choice. All ballot boxes are then gathered in a central location and opened with the candidates and other witnesses present. First, votes are counted by the 1st choice marked on the ballot. Then the candidate with the least votes surrenders them to be redistributed to the remaining candidates based on the next choice on the ballot. This continues until the eleventh candidate is eliminated and his/her votes distributed. The ten remaining candidates are elected as the delegates of the council. Votes could change hands several times, but only according to the desires of the voter. This "instant runoff" ensures that every voter is represented by a delegate of his/her choice and that delegates ultimately receive all the votes due to them.

To ensure that the council accurately represents every voter and forms a precise mirror of the community, the power of each delegate is "weighted." Instead of casting one vote in the council, each delegate casts the number of votes that they ultimately received in the election. Every voter is equally represented, whether "their delegate" holds ten votes or ten thousand. Groups of all sizes, both large segments of society and very small minorities, are heard and their exact voting strength considered in every decision. Each vote cast in the election continues to count in the council until the next election. In order to protect minorities and ensure "the consent of the governed," a 3/4 majority is required to pass a bill. This gives an effective veto power to any combination of delegates representing 25% of voters. This is the goal of good government. No law should exist if one in every four people disagrees with it. (If a larger majority is required (4/5, 5/6, 7/8, 9/10), even smaller minorities are protected.)

While requiring such a consensus could slow the process, lawmakers would soon learn to build consensus and tailor bills to make them acceptable. FMD is also used to form committees within larger councils that represent all the delegates to expedite the process of finding solutions acceptable to the entire council. The elimination of the bicameral system alone would expedite the process to a much greater degree than a majority would slow it.

On the following example, the highlighted figures are those who received redistributed votes:

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This is participatory democracy. Citizens concerned about any issue can organize a group, register voters, nominate a delegate and increase that delegate's power with each vote they cast. Voters can support any group or candidate and help to shape their group's stance on the issues and advice to their delegate on the council. The core of a delegate's support, and their primary source of advice on issues, is the group that nominated them, but their constituency includes every voter that chose them.

FMD councils can be relatively small and maintain the unparalleled accuracy of representing every voter and almost every interest group in society. The U.S. Congress consists of 435 Representatives and 100 Senators. The first Congress seated a much more manageable 65 in the House and 26 in the Senate. A single FMD council of fifty delegates (chosen from one hundred candidates in a nation-wide election) could much more accurately represent this nation than our current bicameral system. A group representing less than 0.1% of voters could elect an effective delegate to the council. A voter represented by this group has a voice as effective as that of any other voter. State councils could be as small as twenty delegates (chosen from forty statewide candidates). Local councils could seat as few as ten delegates (chosen from twenty candidates). This allows them to be inexpensive and to work quickly as the need arises. The cost of government could be cut dramatically with FMD (savings in office expense, aides, travel, security, etc.) allowing funds to be better utilized for the public's benefit.

With FMD, campaigns are overwhelmingly positive, since attacking another candidate does not directly benefit the attacker (as it clearly does in a two-party system). Emphasis is instead placed on drawing attention to one's qualifications and character in order to "rise above the crowd." Voters could narrow down their decision on a single issue at a time, beginning with those that they consider the most important. For instance, if I am strongly anti-abortion I can begin by eliminating pro-abortion candidates. Next, I may eliminate those opposed to free trade, etc. If I wish to be represented by someone from my area, I may begin by eliminating all others.

Reliable, easily accessible information is vital for voters to choose from such a large number of candidates. To provide it and to diminish fund-raising pressures and the influence of wealth or contributors, each candidate submits a standard, letter-size "profile sheet." On it they declare their qualifications, beliefs, positions, voting record, and how they were chosen as their group's nominee. The election commission publishes booklets
containing copies of these sheets, in random-order, and a sample ballot listing all
candidates with their running mates and nominating group. These provide name
recognition and a precise record of promises and positions that could be checked against
past and future voting records. A web page could also be provided with the ability to sort
candidates on various criteria. (State and national candidates could be given thirty-
second television spots in a continuous, random-order format.) Any organization could
be officially sanctioned to provide a forum if the commission is convinced that all
candidates are given equal treatment. The commission encourages candidates to limit
non-sanctioned advertisement, reports on any amounts that are spent and urges voters to
be suspicious of such material. Like a debate moderator, the election commission affords
an orderly, equitable "freedom of speech" to all the candidates and fulfills the intent of
the first amendment.
FMD is very similar to Interactive Representation (IR), a new election system outlined in
Reinventing Congress 21st Century. The authors, Sol Erdrman, the founder and
president of Democracy 2000, and Lawrence Susskind, director of the MIT-Harvard
Public Disputes Program, the Harvard Program on Negotiation, and the Consensus
Building Institute, conclude that our leaders should represent and negotiate specifically
for groups of people who share a common interest. FMD differs from IR by eliminating
districts, restricting nominations to established groups, and requiring a majority in the
assembly.

While our current system of government must be celebrated as a huge advance over
monarchies and dictatorships, we must admit that it fails to fulfill the principles of
democracy. It fails to elect an assembly that truly represents the community. It fails to
protect the rights of many American citizens since minority groups are grossly under-
represented. On the other hand, it gives excessive power to single-issue pressure groups
that use their wealth to influence the system. Every ten years it divides people into
arbitrary, single-member-districts in a complicated and very partisan procedure. It
discourages citizens from voting by failing to offer them real choices, since only two
political parties control the nomination process. It encourages expensive, negative
campaigns, and divisive, partisan politics influenced by campaign contributors. It places
an enormous amount of power in the hands of one individual, the chief executive, whose
election is often controversial. In our system, every election polarizes the electorate.
There are only winners and losers, Democrats and Republicans, slave and free, Union and
Rebel, black and white, rich and poor. Every voter must choose sides. No middle ground
is allowed. To be truly legitimate, a democracy must recognize the multitude of groups
in a society and enable them to share power.

The presidential contest of 2000 highlighted some of these problems. It began by touting
one candidate as the front-runner primarily based on his firm control over his party's
fund-raising apparatus. In the primaries, two respected candidates were eliminated
before most of the nation had a chance to vote. Multi-million dollar campaigns were
shallow and viciously negative. Despite the fact that a very close race was expected,
turnout was only 51.2% of eligible voters. Antiquated voting machines and unclear
procedures to count the votes confused the outcome. Finally, a series of openly partisan
court battles ended when the US Supreme Court awarded a large block of electoral votes
and the Presidency to the candidate with fewer popular votes. Two men received

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practically the same number of votes; but based on the narrowest of margins, one became a private citizen and the other became the most powerful person in the world. Since then, many have suggested remedies such as up-to-date, accurate voting systems, better registration procedures, provisional ballots, campaign finance reform, and eliminating the Electoral College. But consider this fact. Even if the Electoral College was eliminated and there was not one problem with any voting machines or procedures throughout the entire country, one person could still win the presidency with less than half of the electorate. (Each candidate's support is much less than 50% before other candidates are eliminated in the primaries.) There is a long history of just such controversy in our system. The elections of Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Rutherford B. Hayes, Harry S. Truman, and John F. Kennedy (among others) were either disputed or were close enough to easily have been.

To make matters worse, an enormous amount of power has been transferred over the years from the Congress to the Presidency. Our founding fathers purposely gave Congress the responsibility to control the bulk of power in government, including the right to set the budget, regulate commerce with foreign nations, raise, support, and regulate the military, and declare war. Yet because Congress is so reluctant to face tough issues, they have virtually given the President all of these powers. One individual simply cannot adequately represent a community and should not be trusted with such enormous power.

Parliamentary systems suffer from the same problem. They are not designed for independent debate and the development of consensus policies. They are designed to select a stable Prime Minister who wields inordinate power. In the Constitutional Convention, Edmund Randolph was "vehemently opposed" to a single executive, saying that it "smacked of monarchy." Randolph preferred a committee of three to form the executive branch. Perhaps he had a great idea that was too revolutionary for his time. FMD executive councils of three or four members (chosen from the five or six largest groups) could be formed at any level. Power must be stripped away from executives who cannot represent society. A truly representative assembly designed to facilitate the legislative process must control power.

Politicians in Congress avoid tough decisions because of the nature of our election system. It dictates that they will face only one viable opponent in the next election. A challenger's best strategy to unseat an incumbent is to portray a portion of their record as harmful to some group within their diverse district. In their book, Reinventing Congress 21st Century, Erdman and Susskind argue that our system inhibits the legislative process. "A legislator's job is just as troubling. Each one faces voters of all kinds. Anything realistic a lawmaker says or does will anger some key group of voters in the district. The surest way to stay in office is to duck most hard issues with slogans and blame the nation's most serious problems on the other political party." We are bound by a system that represents arbitrarily defined geographic districts filled with such a variety of interests that a single individual cannot adequately represent them.

Our system to elect an assembly was designed to uphold traditional power structures based on land ownership and business interests. Sir Edmund Burke (1729-97) argued that members of the British Parliament should be "trustees," chosen to make decisions based on their understanding of what is best for the community, rather than "delegates," chosen to champion the concerns of a particular group in society. FMD elects leaders

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who champion a particular group and work to build consensus concerning what is best for the community.

Our system has been described as "two-party," "single-member-district," or "winner-take-

all." The community is arbitrarily divided into geographic "districts." One person is
elected by a plurality vote to represent each district. Voters' choices are almost always
limited to only two viable candidates. (Since many candidates face little or no
opposition, voters often have no choice whatsoever.) This generates two parties
competing to speak for the majority, none of which is able to serve as an effective voice
for any minority group. Minorities can only be elected if they form a majority in a given
district. The elite of society is often able to use their prestige, power and wealth to
control the government, disregarding the welfare of other groups in society.

US Senators represent states, the least representative, most arbitrary of districts since they
vary greatly in population. California has approximately forty times the population of
Wyoming; yet in the Senate, each state is allowed two seats with exactly the same voting
power. Therefore, in the Senate, every Wyoming voter has the same power as forty
California voters. Eight states have less than one million residents while eighty-one cities
in the United States have more than one million. Perhaps each of these should have a
seat in the Senate? Government on every level should represent the people directly, not
some arbitrary list of governments on the next level. The concept of the Senate was
added for one reason: to appease state government leaders and ensure ratification of the
Constitution. It is not representative and gridlock in government is clearly due to the
complexities of passing bills through a bicameral legislature.

The 435 seats in the House of Representatives are distributed to the states based on their
populations, with the exception that each state must have one seat. Every ten years the
seats in the House are reallotted based on the new census. In each cycle some states
lose seats and others gain seats as the population shifts. Within every state with more
than one seat, district lines must be re-drawn in a highly complicated, partisan procedure
so that each district contains approximately the same population.

The word "gerrymander" was coined when Governor Eldridge Gerry of Massachusetts redrew
the district map in a strange "salamander" pattern for his political advantage. Every
ten years, our leaders do the same thing. The Supreme Court even used this method to
create minority majority districts" to help overcome racial discrimination; however, they
reversed themselves when faced with several extreme examples. Every ten years there
are countless outrages, court battles, and political deals to oppose or resolve re-districting
issues. The question arises, "Which minority should we attempt to help and to what
extent?"

Very few people understand the difficulties inherent in the process or realize what is at
stake. It may seem hard to believe, but the party that controls the re-districting process
often determines who will be represented for the next ten years. It is easy to demonstrate
how the voting power of one party or group can be diluted or enhanced by moving
district lines. Suppose fifteen Democrats and fifteen Republicans live in a community.
To elect a six-member council they form six districts, each containing five voters. The
council should seat three Democrats and three Republicans, but the way the lines are
drawn can easily skew the results. If the lines are drawn as shown on the left, two
Democrats and four Republicans are elected. If the lines are drawn as shown on the right,
four Democrats and two Republicans are elected.

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Also, redistricting is often used to create "safe seats" for incumbent representatives. Voters in every "non-competitive" district are denied the effective use of their vote, as their choices drop from two to one. Rob Richie, executive director of the Center for Voting and Democracy, had this to say, "Despite the "vicious blood-sport" behind the scenes to win this once-a-decade battle, the real story is that the status quo was preserved in most states and incumbents in their respective parties are safer than ever. They've made more races non-competitive... there will be only 30 to 50 competitive races out of 435 at the midterms." Mr. Richie and Steven Hill also said, "Whatever political party controls the line-drawing process has the God-like powers to guarantee themselves majority control and make or break individual political careers. They rely on "packing" and "cracking," packing as many opponents into as few districts as possible and cracking an opponent's natural base into different districts. Powerful computers and software have made this process of unnatural selection ever more sophisticated and precise. Does it make a difference? You bet it does. In Virginia, the Democrats this year won their first statewide race for governor since 1989, but Republicans went from barely controlling the statehouse to a two-thirds' majority. How? That's right -- they drew this year's district lines. The best example of partisan gerrymandering used to be California's congressional plan in the 1980s. One district was a ghastly looking, insect-like polygon with 385 sides. The result? In the 1984 elections the Democrats increased their share of California's house seats to 60 percent even as... Republican congressional candidates won more votes than Democrats in the state."

Districts are used on all levels of government. Therefore, states must re-district for seats in the state assembly and the state Senate. Counties and cities must re-draw the lines that separate voters into precincts and wards. Our system produces such a dense spider-web of district lines that very few people know which district they reside in for a given level of government. Districts are sometimes "defended" on the grounds that they force voters to elect a local candidate. Is it a good thing that our choices are automatically limited to local candidates, none of whom represent our concerns? Most people would rather vote based on issues more important than the candidate's residence. It is impossible to divide people into geographic districts that reflect the many varied convictions held by voters. Free Market Democracy completely eliminates districts and all the problems associated with them.

With FMD, no geographical area is guaranteed a delegate. Voters choose a representative based on whatever issues are important to them. However, if a number of people become concerned that no one from a certain area has been nominated, they can encourage groups to nominate from that area. If that fails, they can form a new group and convince enough voters to register with them so that they can nominate a candidate. If they cannot form a group large enough to nominate, it is not a widely held concern. To succeed, they must change their appeal or broaden the area they hope to represent. With

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FMD, any group that feels any issue is not being addressed satisfactorily may realistically seek to nominate and elect a delegate to address their concerns.

A brief scan of our history reveals fraud, injustice, corruption and periods of instability including a civil war that devastated half of the country and cost over 600,000 American lives. In the early 1800s, our system failed to prevent a tiny elite of plantation owners (about one percent of the population) from using their wealth and influence to elect "trustee" Presidents and completely control state government in the South. These state legislatures appointed US Senators committed to preserving slavery, a practice that is intolerable in a true democracy. Since US Senators represent states (not individuals) opposition to slavery in the South was not represented and sectionalism was exaggerated in the Senate. The Senate prevented the House of Representatives from passing legislation to regulate or abolish slavery.

The Civil War resulted from the complete failure of our federal government to resolve this issue. The aristocratic Southern elite sought to preserve their power by dividing the nation. The only reason we continue as one nation is that President Lincoln steadfastly committed military force to "preserve the union" and eventually defeated the armies of the South, which were largely composed of militias funded for years by the plantation elite. For the next hundred years, our system allowed the heirs of this elite to exclude millions of African-Americans from participating in our "democratic" system, reducing them to virtual slavery.

In the Northern cities, immigrants, factory workers and unskilled laborers were often denied the right to vote and treated as badly as the slaves the Northern abolitionists sought to free. Native-Americans were hunted down like animals, Mexicans and Asians were treated as second-class citizens at best. During WWII, the rights of thousands of Japanese-Americans were denied as they were herded into internment camps for the duration of the war. Many Americans feel that the military-industrial complex took control of the government and welcomed the Vietnam War to further their existence.

It is almost impossible to impact the policies of our government without spending millions of dollars to elect and/or influence our leaders. Many Americans have simply stopped participating. Voter turnout hovers close to 50% in presidential election years and falls to as little as 20% when no serious opposition challenges incumbent Senators or Representatives. Some groups in this country feel so alienated from the political process that they are compelled to lash out at government authority with violence. Our system has produced law by judicial review, war by executive order, and gridlock by legislative design.

Several conferences and commissions have reviewed the 2000 elections. While minor recommendations were offered, no changes to the institutions themselves were deemed necessary. Most referred to the proceedings as merely a "lesson in civics." We cannot assume that our freedoms will always be secure if we continue to ignore the problems in our election system. We must realize that our vote very seldom makes a difference and that we are not offered real, viable choices when we stand before the ballot. A large percentage of Americans have declared that our system is illegitimate by refusing to participate.

We have a long tradition of examining, altering and even abolishing the form of our government. Our founding fathers examined their government (the British king and parliament) and risked their lives to deny its power over them. They used the phrase

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"taxation without representation" to declare British rule illegitimate because they were not represented in Parliament. In 1781, we ratified the Articles of Confederation and formed our own government. In 1789, we discarded the Articles for our present Constitution. The twelfth amendment (1804) and the decisions of state governments from 1788 to 1832 (to award all electors based on statewide elections) radically changed the way we choose a President. The fifteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-fourth amendments (1870, 1920, and 1964) greatly extended the franchise. Senators were appointed by state legislatures until 1913, when the seventeenth amendment mandated statewide elections. Primary elections, instituted by progressives in the early 1900's, fundamentally changed the dynamics of the nomination process. Even proportional representation has been tried over the years in municipal, county, and state government.

Today, we are at a watershed in our history. We cannot be satisfied to simply learn the history and peculiar format of our current government as outlined in the Constitution of 1789. Since that day, other nations have made great advances in representative government that was unknown to the founding fathers. Like our forefathers, today's generation of Americans must expose the fundamental flaws in our current election system, which has denied an effective voice to millions of our fellow citizens. Like our forefathers, we must break with the traditions of the past, consider the options before us, and implement a new election system that fulfills the principles of democracy.

There are many ideas of how government should be changed. Many feel that government itself should be replaced by "direct democracy" where voters decide every issue. However, referendums have illustrated the many problems involved in presenting complex issues to voters for a simple yes/no vote. It is extremely difficult for any group or individual to write ballot titles and proposal descriptions that adequately explain the issues without some bias. We need organized government made up of leaders who understand issues and formulate coherent policies.

The writings of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) declare that each group in society should share power in government in proportion to its relative size. Proportional Representation (PR), based on his ideas, is used to elect the legislatures of Australia, New Zealand, and most of Europe. Great Britain recently commissioned a study to consider using PR in its election system. Dozens of organizations are hoping to see it adopted in the United States, including the Center for Voting and Democracy, the PR Library, and Citizens for Proportional Representation in Washington state, California, Maryland, and Illinois. Many varieties are used, all of which have some drawbacks, but the principle is the same. Votes are cast for one of several parties whose number of seats in the assembly is based on its percentage of votes. The main objection to implementing PR in the United States is the concept of voting for a party rather than for individual candidates. PR systems also produce large dominant parties competing to speak for the majority. Party platforms are broad in order to accommodate the beliefs of thousands or millions of members. Party loyalty often squelches independent thought and new parties are at a distinct disadvantage. Assemblies often must be very large to provide fair representation for smaller groups.

Cumulative voting (CV) is a system in which three delegates are elected in each district. Voters choose from four candidates and cast three votes for one, two, or three of them. It was used in the Illinois House of Representatives for 110 years from 1870 to 1980. It was abandoned as part of an effort to shrink the size of government, but a strong
movement is hoping to reinstate it. Several cities are considering it as an alternative system of elections. It elects more than one person to represent a district but the choices are still very limited and only a very few groups are represented. Multi-member districts must also be re-drawn periodically and the party that controls the re-districting process still determines who will be represented for the next ten years.

There are widespread efforts to use Instant Run-off Voting (IRV) in the United States. With IRV, single-member districts are still used, but voters rank candidates on the ballot in order of preference. Once the first-place votes are counted, the candidate with the least votes surrenders them to be distributed to the next choice on the ballots. This continues until one candidate is elected by gaining a majority of the votes cast.

In our current system, third party candidates often play the role of a spoiler, taking votes away from a major party candidate. IRV raises the viability of these third party candidates, since votes cast for them are not "wasted" for the contest between the major party candidates. However, for an assembly, it still elects one person to represent a district with a wide variety of often-opposing concerns. Once again, it is impossible to form districts that represent every group and the control of the re-districting process is all-important. Single-Transferrable-Voting (STV), also known as the "Irish System," is a complicated variation of IRV used to elect assembly members who attain a set quota of votes.

STV has some real advantages, as does IRV. But, the vote-counting procedure for STV is more complicated due to the formulation of quotas. Once a candidate reaches their quota and is elected, their excess votes are redistributed. Someone must decide which of their votes are the excess ones and which are used to elect them. The decision can make a huge difference in the election of the other delegates. With FMD, much fewer votes change hands. Only those of the candidates who are eliminated are redistributed and they have the least votes, by definition. Also, most STV systems use multi-member districts, which carry many of the same problems as single-member districts. Can the lines be drawn in a way that is fair to every group?

The real problem is that these systems do not guarantee a council that accurately represents, and forms policy based on a consensus of, the whole community. Consensus policies should be the goal of good government. A 3/4, 4/5, or even 9/10 majority is are no more arbitrary than a 1/2 majority. Why should one half of the community, plus one, rule over the other half? Requiring a majority is the only way to guarantee that minority rights are safeguarded. With a 9/10 majority, a minority as small as 10% has an effective veto over legislation.

PR does a fair job, but FMD is much better. The council should be a mirror of the community, representing the thoughts and desires of every person and, as much as possible, every group in society. Even tiny groups deserve to be represented.

For example, let's say a group exists in a community of 100,000 which is comprised of only 1000 individuals, or 1% of the population and that the governing council consists of only ten delegates. Since this group is scattered throughout the community and so few in number, they cannot hope to elect a representative if elections are held by single-member-district no matter how the lines are drawn. Using STV, with each delegate allotted equal power in the council, a group composed of 10% of the population could elect a representative, depending on the way the votes were counted. Using FMD, the most popular delegate may hold 18% of the votes in the council, but the least delegate

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may hold only 1% and afford this group their voice in government and reflect their exact voting strength. Weighted delegates extends the principle of "one person / one vote" to "one voter / one vote in the council."

Even if they fail to elect a representative, as long as they can gain the status of one of the twenty largest groups (based on registered voters) their candidate is given all the exposure that the other fourteen are given. In time their support can grow and they can have a very realistic hope of representation.

All of these systems offer some relief, but not one of them fulfills the principles of democracy. Free Market Democracy does. We need FMD in the United States of America. However, before we dismiss the time-honored institutions of our government, we must be sure that a new system will work in all contingencies. Therefore, change must begin on the local level. Local communities can use Free Market Democracy to elect town councils and quorum courts. FMD advisory councils could also be formed, without any actual power. These could monitor the current government by attending meetings, asking questions, formulating solutions, and publishing their recommendations. These advisory councils could eventually replace the traditional institutions. Once proven on the local level, FMD could be implemented at ever-higher levels of government in larger cities, state governments, and finally the U.S. House of Representatives.

We also need to encourage the use of Free Market Democracy around the world as the basis of our foreign policy. The United States of America is blessed with more freedom, prosperity and power than any nation that has ever existed on the face of the earth. We are the world's policemen, whether we like it or not. We pride ourselves on being the primary defender of democracy in the world. We must be ready to offer the best system possible for electing legitimate, truly representative, democratic government.

America has always offered the poor such opportunities for upward mobility that it is difficult to comprehend the depth of despair and animosity that the poor of other nations have felt for the privileged classes who systematically denied them the most basic of human dignities. The Soviet Union, the People Republic of China, and many other movements around the world sought to overthrow these traditional power structures in the name of the common people. The United States and other Western governments militarily opposed these "communist" or "socialist" movements for two main reasons. The greatest concern was that repressive dictatorships that denied the rights of their people governed these movements. The secondary problem was that their economic policies stripped the business community of their rights of private property ownership. Investment drives the economic engine of the modern world. These movements gave the government control over all investment. Even the best form of government cannot control investment as efficiently as the marketplace. Socialist dictatorships abused every segment of society when they took control of the economy.

We have ample reasons to oppose these movements; but we must address the economic and political disparities that drove millions of people to support them. We must be very careful whom we support so that we are not identified with the root cause of the problem. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 repeated the all too common message that in our efforts to "defeat Communism" or "pursue American national interests" we have supported dictators and corrupt traditional power structures. Charges have often been made that our federal government is so controlled by large corporations and other

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business interests that we have destroyed "democratic" governments to preserve fortunes and business enterprises. We must punish terrorists by all means, but we must examine our foreign policy and use our diplomacy and military power to establish, promote, and support governments that uphold the principles of democracy. Free Market Democracy solve the conflict between capital and labor interests that spawned the rise of socialist movements. This is possible because every group in society agrees that they are adequately represented in the assembly and the requirement of a 3/4 majority forces these groups to engage in constructive negotiation and form consensus policies. It protects the rights of every minority group in society, including business and investment interests, which are usually a very small minority in most undeveloped countries. The business sector needs the support of delegates representing only 1/4 of voters to veto measures adverse to their interests. If a larger majority (4/5, 5/6, 7/8, 9/10) is required in the assembly, an even smaller base of support is required to protect business interests or any other small minority in society.

Many times we have attempted and failed to export the American system of government. It is simply too complicated, too prone to corruption, and too unrepresentative. It fails to represent the common people or legitimate business interests. It rewards racketeers, warlords and corrupt officials who control the system through fraud and intimidation. It has failed because it is not designed to uphold the principles of democracy.

We can organize a world-wide, grass-roots, non-profit foundation to promote FMD. We can form FMD advisory councils and actual governments at all levels in the US and Europe. We can convince existing local, state, national or international election commissions to encourage the use of FMD. Finally, we can also petition the United Nations to set up a "FMD Elections Commission" and form FMD governments around the world. This commission could administer the registration, nomination and election processes. In hostile situations it could even appoint a outside speaker to administer the meetings, agenda, and voting procedures in the first crucial days, months or even years.

The political thought and proposals of this generation are not inferior to those of the founding fathers. We must follow in their footsteps to understand the principles of democracy and the deficiencies of our current system. Free Market Democracy can produce legitimate, truly representative, democratic government. We must test it, refine it, implement it, and expand its use for ourselves, for our children and for our world.

Any community can choose to change the format of its government, as long as it is democratic. To expedite the implementation of FMD, a local community could use it to form a powerless, ten-seat advisory council. First, a petition is circulated to form an advisory council at the next general election. The twenty largest groups in the community are asked if they would nominate a candidate to represent them on the council. Other groups that express a desire to nominate are also added to the list. An advertising campaign is used to educate the public of the need for the council, its benefits, its formation, its operation, and to encourage voters to register as supporters of one of these groups. The council would be elected and attend all city council meetings, public functions and discussions. Delegates would ask questions, do research, and the council would issue recommendations. Over time, as voters become familiar with the process, they could choose to replace the current government with the FMD council. As word spreads, so would FMD councils.

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REFERENCES

1. The assembly at the next higher level of government would appoint the commission. An international commission could even be formed for national elections around the world.

2. This formula could be adjusted as appropriate.

3. In the event of concurrent elections when a delegate/vice-delegate ticket is nominated for assemblies on their current level and on a higher-level, a provisional ticket could be chosen to represent their group on the lower level should they be elected at the higher level.


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