

NARPAC, INC. VOTERS' BILL OF RIGHTS – PART 2

Technology Can Help Political Processes Keep Up with Population Growth

With modern technologies, there seem to be almost limitless ways for Congressional representatives to communicate with their constituents, regardless of how many there may be (by 2050, each member of the House will represent *one million people* in his district). While some have suggested simply increasing the number of representatives beyond the current 435 (established just over 100 years ago), and the number of senators as well, this would certainly make an already unmanageable governance situation even worse in the capitol itself. Rather, it would seem far more reasonable to improve each member's ability to faithfully aggregate the key inputs of those he or she represents. The problem is little different than for large businesses dealing with millions of customers in thousands of stores (and online): the solution doesn't lie in more vice-presidents, but in the development of more intermediate-level managers.

Don't Increase the Size of Congress, Increase District Subdivisions

It is not unusual for a representative's district to be subdivided into separate "Wards". There is no apparent reason why these Wards shouldn't be regularized and staffed with politically savvy, relatively non-partisan, people who can both speak for, and listen for, his/her representative. In fact, one could imagine that they might be on a separate, probably federal, payroll (or grant). In short, what appears to be needed are:

"officials, usually appointed (hired) by the government" (in this case at the Ward level? but with a significant degree of independence) **"who are charged with representing the interests of the public by investigating and addressing complaints of maladministration or violation of rights"**

– i.e., the classic definition of an *ombudsman!* It is but a small step from this classic function to certifying that Ward's election results, and providing educational materials for that Ward as well.

One could also stipulate that these Wards should be of "regular" shape that would avoid the current sleazy practice of "gerrymandering", another corruption of the election process, which insults the voter and was not foreseen by the Founders. (This can most easily be done by limiting the ratio of a Ward's perimeter in miles, say, to its area in square miles.) Furthermore, the number of these Wards could grow in proportion to the population so that, say, none should encompass more than 100,000 people.

One-Voter, One Vote – Modernize Electoral College Representation

There is yet another consideration for these Ward offices and Ward ombudsmen as well. Another outdated feature of the Constitution is the inclusion of an Electoral College originally intended to select the President based on the votes of "electors" chosen by the states, and presumably smart enough to pick an outstanding leader -- as the voters were presumably not. Over the years, this process has become bastardized: each state now has several "electors" picked by the state, each in proportion to their population.

But it seems equally ludicrous that those chosen to be "electors" often have virtually no credentials in their own communities. Many appear simply to be being rewarded with a freebee, schmoozing, trip in return for local partisan political activity, including donations. Why shouldn't they be recognized for their local community leadership, being acknowledged for their role in our democratic process, not their partisanship?

Some states require a "winner-takes-all" vote from their "electors" while others require votes proportional to the popular vote in that state. The Constitutionally-authorized result, of course, is that it is not unusual for the candidate with a smaller popular vote to win, thus upsetting the underlying democratic principle of "one-man-one-vote"; which is not, in fact, decreed in the Constitution. Even more ironic, the word "democracy" does not appear in our Declaration of Independence, Constitution, or Pledge of Allegiance.

Various amendments have already been unsuccessfully introduced to fix this glaring problem. There may in fact be good reasons for keeping the Electoral College -- the main one being that it seems to effectively discourage the growth of multiple parties which clearly spawn ineffective governments such as have plagued several European countries. It is surely conceivable that the proposed "Ward Officers" could become the more numerous new "electors" and more accurately reflect the popular vote, even if they retained the "winner-takes-all" approach for a much smaller cohort.

Integrate Public Responsibilities and Public Schools

There is yet another benefit from the existence of scores of small, but politically professional, offices throughout each state. It could be required that these offices be located within public high schools, that their staffs interact with the students, and, equally important, that students become involved in the work of the Ward office. There are currently well over 12 million kids in almost 18,000 American High Schools, with over a million teachers and several million other employees. Ward Office duties could readily be assumed by existing (or retired)

school system employees under grants from, say, the Congressional Research Service, and augmented by community volunteers.

Furthermore, the use of high school facilities for political events (candidate debates; polling places; regular places for the Representatives to meet their constituents; lectures on major legislative initiatives; discussions of, and voting on, Constitutional amendments; etc.) could not only involve the school, but equally important, such events would also draw community residents into the activities (and physical conditions) of their schools. Surely it could not harm overall local civic awareness and involvement.