

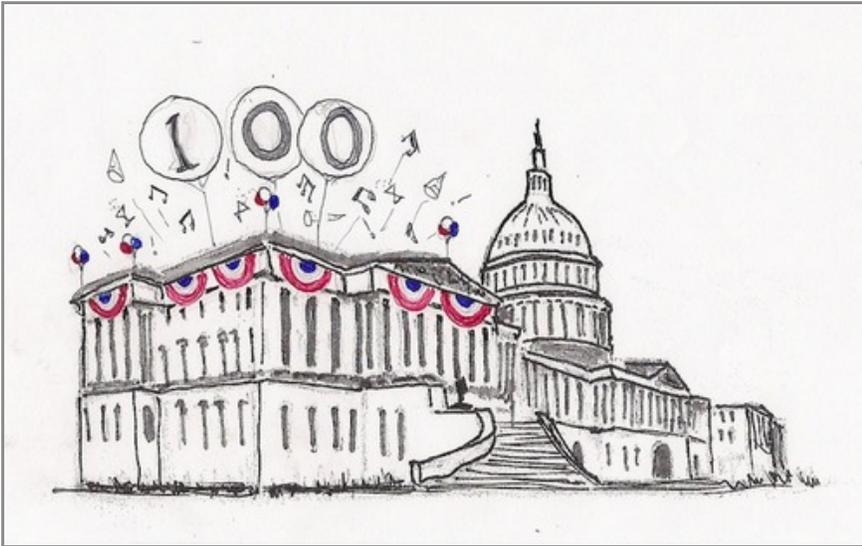
NARPAC, Inc.

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SEPTEMBER 2, 2013

ESTABLISHING A VOTERS' BILL OF RIGHTS - PART 4



NARPAC, Inc. winds up its analysis of fundamental problems in our American voting system, which still compromise the underlying premises for our still-incomplete transition from republic to democracy: it's been 100 years since we started direct election of senators, and more steps still lie ahead. Sixteen separate voters' "rights and obligations" are presented after the fashion of the original Bill of Rights. They range from controlling gerrymandering, to outlawing corporations as individuals, and from excessive barrages of advertising to the bias of corrupt campaign funding from outside the candidate's district — all issues which the Founding Fathers could not have foreseen.

We do not presume to be constitutional lawyers, nor that 16 separate amendments are in any way fundamental to our objectives. But the facts seem clear: our democracy is neither complete nor drifting in the right direction. The Constitution as it now stands is simply too outdated and too vague to counteract the corrosive effects of the declining basis of our 21st Century society, or to compete with other increasingly competitive democratic nations.

Spelling Out Voter Rights — and Obligations

It is also of interest that our beloved Constitution makes very little distinction between "rights" and "obligations". It is clear that only members of The House of Representatives "shall be elected

by the People of the several states”, and the Founding Fathers were quite explicit about who should and should not vote (subsequently modified by several amendments re by and for whom). But no voters’ rights or obligations are suggested in our Constitution, despite complaints of King James II’s abuse of “free elections” for the House of Parliament rectified in the English Bill of Rights of the late 1600’s. Here is a “strawman” list for consideration:

A Bill of Rights — and Obligations — for American Voters

Voter registration shall be free of unnecessary and pejorative obstacles;

Voting districts shall not be drawn to perpetuate any majority party;

Voting places and procedures shall not cause undue/unequal inconvenience or cost that inhibits voting;

Voters shall not be forced to compete with larger voting blocs —such as corporations, non-profits, or action committees—or be marginalized by anonymous donors, local or outside the voting jurisdiction;

Voters shall not be exposed to unusual barrages of public media advertising of any kind, and to none that fail to meet accepted national standards for “truth in advertising”;

Voters shall not have their choices suborned or reversed by subsequent “winner-take-all” aggregations;

Voters shall not have their ballots depreciated by influences and resources from out-of-jurisdiction organizations, candidates or legislators;

Voters shall be assured access, direct or indirect, to the legislators who “represent” them, and a means of learning about, and expressing opinions on, current issues;

Voters shall be provided regular information on all their legislators’ official activities, as well as all their current campaign donors and contacts with lobbyists;

Voters shall be assured that neither their potential candidates for office, nor their elected representatives are beholden to any special

interest group, by oath, promise, or contract, or to only those who supported their election;

Voters shall be assured that their representatives are working to govern all their constituents, and are not distorting progress in the common good by perpetuating without compromise some extreme party faction or ideology, including their own;

Voters shall expect their representatives to become fully versed in their governmental functions and practices, and to follow the accepted rules and standards of the reputable business world;

Voters shall expect their representatives to learn to work cooperatively with their colleagues of all parties, and to minimize their demands for hometown visits whenever Congress is in session;

Voters shall expect their representatives to spend a full work-week at their jobs, and take advantage of modern technologies to keep in touch with their root constituents;

Voters shall expect their government to prepare rational long-range projections of global changes, physical, technological, and otherwise, for which precautionary preparatory actions are appropriate to preserve future national wellbeing;

Voters shall recognize the need to keep the American Constitution relevant and applicable to current and expected times and accept their own roles and responsibilities in amending it on a regular basis as necessary and appropriate.

(Many of these issues are elaborated in a longer separate paper on "Message to State Governments — Help Restore the Relevance of Our American Constitution", along with over a dozen proposed amendments)

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