

A New Democracy

I: The End of the Cleavage of States

“We always want what is good for us, but we do not always see what it is. The populace is never corrupted, but it is often tricked, and only then does it appear to want what is bad”
Rousseau, “On the Social Contract,” Book 2 Chapter 3

There is a deep rhetorical lie at the heart of our American politics, a lie used by those who only care for the whims of power to exploit for their own purposes. It is a lie for which all our other ills are based on. It is a lie whose deconstruction is necessary for any other real change to begin. If we want a democracy that cares for the will of the people, we need to finally realize that the social cleavage at the heart of our politics is no longer one of states, and that basing our governmental structure around balancing a conflict of the states is an antiquated idea which reduces the government’s ability to effectively represent the will of the people which authorize its existence. It is through the following I hope to convince you, dear reader, of this and allow us to push for a real electoral reform to have this government achieve the true idealism behind the United States.

I open to you on the more theoretical ground, that a government in the Enlightenment model is authorized by its people to exercise their will and insure their liberty, and when a government fails to act with the consent of its people then the people have a right to change their government. In a democracy, a legislature therefore gains its legitimate authorization by reflecting the will of its electorate, as evidenced by a legitimate vote. The legislature is then filled with representatives of the people authorized by that vote to act, and the makeup of that

legislature in theory is representative of the vote. It is with this vote, where everyone is able to have an equal say and where the final result reflects the will of the electorate, that a system of democratic rule gets its authorization. Our current governmental model, based on a conflict between unique states, fails to reflect the will of the American electorate on the federal level.

Our current model of governmental structure gives some segments of the electorate a disproportionate edge in the electoral system. This is no better evidence than the Senate, where each state is given 2 senators regardless of a state's population. The effects of this are obvious, where a voter in the smallest of states has more individual voting power than a voter of the largest of states, for when your total base and margin of victory is smaller an individual voter has a greater ability to impact the result of a race. This also means that a senator representing a smaller constituency has equal voting power to a senator representing a larger constituency, in effect giving the smaller constituency a larger say in the policy outcomes of the Senate. In practical effect, the will of some voters matters more than the of other voters in the Senate.

This is a similar phenomena in the Electoral College, where those same small states are once again given an electoral advantage based on nothing more than geography. However, the way a state's electoral votes are apportioned also serves to leave out the will of an individual state's minority voters in the outcome of the main presidential election. A state's electoral votes are usually apportioned in the First Past the Post method, where the winner of a plurality of a state's votes takes all of the state's electoral votes. If a person lives in a safe state but likes the minority party in that state, there is a better chance than not the outcome of that state's electoral votes are a foregone conclusion and there is no point in that vote being cast. The way it is done

now, a state's electoral vote distribution fails to regard the minority opinion of a state and actively discourages voting in elections for the presidency in a safe state.

For many of the opposing opinion they wonder about whether or not the big states of our union will trample those little states without the constitutional "protections" bestowed upon them. To this complaint I give two answers. Firstly, under truly national voting systems a smart campaign would not just ignore one half of its electorate, but would appeal to all the people with its platform. Secondly, big states are not monolithic entities with similar agendas, and oftentimes this complaint is really a code for "will the other team win more than they do now." To this I say no, for the big states often have the political variety of the small states, and that diversity of opinion insures that any campaign worthy of merit will campaign in states big and small, for when every vote is treated equally you will need any vote you can get no matter where it comes from. As it stands, our current system takes the minority opinion in states and does not represent their will in the upper house of our national legislature nor in our executive elections.

In addition, the current realities of our politics do not show a competition between various states, but a competition between various ideologies. Often times the voters in one state will share national policy objectives with the voters of another state, and this is down to one thing, faction. Party affiliation is now a more accurate predictor of one's policy preferences on the national level, and pretending that it is the states that form the basis of political conflict on the national level is an exercise in foolish discourse. It is a tool used by factions to justify the current imbalance in our national level, made for the real goal of promoting one's faction.

It is with all of this that I must conclude that our current system of organizing our Senate and Presidential elections is non-reflective of the will of the people of the United States. It is an

antiquated model that has long been in need of change, and it is my hope to be the catalyst of that change. It is time for us to reform our system away from the flotsam of fantasy and into the ship of reality. I am not attacking the federal system as a whole, but I am rather seeking to realign that federal system so that we can make it closer to the ideals and promises of that system. The federal government, in order to best serve the people of the United States that authorize it, must be made into a body that represents a nationwide electorate. In the coming issues I will show you, dear reader, my recommendations in order to achieve this most necessary and proper of goals.

-LIVIA