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NeoProg Politics, Philosophy, and Culture

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 08, 2006

Vote Fixing

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I am going to outline my ideas on how to have fair Federal elections. The only way to be sure that all the votes are counted is for each citizen to take more responsibility for their own vote - that means giving up the Secret Ballot and replacing it with the Personal Ballot. With my plan there will be two ways to vote - on a computer or with a new Federal absentee ballot. I predict that voting will mostly be done on the internet within 10 years.

Federal Election reform outline:

The General Election:

Occurs every even numbered year on the first full weekend in November - Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The General Election Includes all qualified candidates for the offices of President and Vice President every four years plus all of the US Senate seats that are up for contest and any qualifying Constitutional ammendments every two years. Completely Federally funded.



Electronic Voting:

It is time to stand up and be counted - by computer voting using public open source code. Citizens can keep their vote confidential behind a PIN number. A special database on a Federal Election Commission website will contain the name of every active registered voter, each of whom will choose to activate their electronic ballot if they want to vote by computer. They could conveniently be able to vote for all of their Federal, State and Local elections from the computer at the same site. If there is a recount, you will be able to verify your own vote (FYI). For those who do not have a personal computer, the Public Libraries will be open for voting on the first contiguous Friday, Saturday and Sunday in November and will be subsidized by the Federal government for that service. Voters could vote from home but would not be allowed to vote on computers owned by their employer or place of employment. For those voters who choose to submit a registered mail-in ballot, it is linked to their page on the FEC Voter Database by a registration number that is used to initially activate their computer ballot. Using instead the mail-in ballot to vote will then automatically deactivate their computer ballot for that election cycle.

The Federal Absentee Ballot:

By September 15, all current voters will receive a registered mail-in ballot for President, Vice President, their US Senators and any Constitutional amendments that may be up for consideration. For those that don't do computers or prefer not to vote on one, they can choose to vote with this paper ballot and will keep a stub with their name and the randomly generated registration number. Ballots can be mailed via the US Post Office by November 1 or handed in there up until the election Sunday in November at midnight Eastern time. All the paper ballots will be delivered to one of three regional counting centers - based on their location in the Eastern/ Central+Mountain / Western time zones. The ballots will be secured at these locations until Monday, when the media and all parties will observe the ballot counting procedures (which are registered and verifiable - voter names confidential to the public do not appear on the ballot). On Tuesday, or when available, the totals of all the votes will be verified or challenged and recounted.

Counting the Votes:

The computer vote tally totals per State is a live online public database, up until the election Sunday in November at midnight Eastern time, when the tally is final (subject to verification). Each voter who chooses to use their electronic ballot can vote and/ or change their vote up until the deadline. On the following Monday, the registered mail-in ballots are processed at the three regional counting centers. When verified, the combined totals are announced and posted on the Federal Election Database.

Recounts:

The voter computer database is transparent public source code and verifiable for recounts. The registered mail-in ballots are counted by

publically certified machines and recounted by hand if questionable or formally challenged or when a random recount is generated. The tally of all the votes together is verified by the FEC and certified by The House of Representatives in Congress.

The Federal Election Commission:

Congress must reform the way all of these powerful commissions work and how the commissioners are selected. There should be no such thing as a recess appointment to any of these commissions like Bush did for three chairs on the FEC in January 2006. These commissions are supposed to oversee the welfare of the whole country, not only a one party agenda. The new and improved Federal Election Commission will administer election and campaign oversight, voters rights, campaign media access, the election database, the registered mail-in ballots and the three regional counting centers. The services of these counting centers can also be purchased by the States to process their local ballots (maybe even private companies, at other times of the year, can purchase use of the facilities). The Commission will also co-ordinate with the US Post Office to deliver the registered mail-in ballots to the Counting Centers. If the Post Office can't handle this job, then contract it strictly regulated to a private company like Federal Express or United Parcel.

The States:

Every two years elections for The House of Representatives will be on the State ballot. Each State should have the right to run their elections however they choose - as long as they do not discriminate or intimidate voters. The House Reps hold Federal offices and congressional districts must be drawn to comply with fair standards that meet strict new Federal requirements that accurately reflect ALL demographics. Attempts to change the US Census to count only citizens should be defeated - in America it is totally unacceptable to have a whole class of uncounted unrepresented "untouchables" who are also living and working and paying taxes and helping the economy and contributing to society. However, only US citizens can vote.

Voter Registration:

Every US citizen eighteen years of age and older is automatically registered to vote and this lifelong right to vote can be lost only if they formally denounce their own citizenship. Maybe it could also be stripped away by a two thirds majority in both houses of Congress - after being convicted of treason - and the Supreme Court upholds it. In other words, one citizen one vote - indivisible with liberty and justice for all. The votings rights laws should be strengthened, updated and made permanent - preferably as a Constitutional Amendment. Felons who have paid their debt to society also should have their voting right restored.

The Primary:

Primary elections should be run by the States and the campaigns funded

by political parties and candidates. Campaign contributions will be mostly Federally unregulated but publically documented and subject to regulation by the individual States. Candidate qualifications for the ballot must meet legislated uniform Federal guidelines for all Federal offices. Elections must be fair and must not discriminate or intimidate the voters. Must count ALL the votes with a voter verifiable paper trail that stays secured inside the ballot box for recounts. Primary elections and political conventions season ends September 1.

The Campaign:

All political parties should have their slate of candidates finalized by August 1, when the General Election campaign phase begins and transparent hard money contributions plus Federal Funding only are allowed. Major Media outlets will be mandated to provide sufficient airtime to all qualified political parties - allocations based on the averaged results of the previous two elections (four years). Debates will be sponsored that include all political parties and candidates that received 5% of the votes in one of the last two elections. As the election approaches, more debates will also be sponsored between the two or three major candidates only. These will be real debates, not just spin sessions - give it back to the Women's League of Voters.

Campaign Contributions:

Each citizen each year allowed up to \$5000 personal hard money contributions per candidate plus \$5000 hard money per party period - all fully accounted for. No other hard money at all from non-citizens, corporations, unions, governments or any other entity. In the General Election phase, starting August 15, only this hard money and Public Financing funds can be used for the campaign. Before that, in the primary season, the soft money contributions should be essentially Federally unregulated but fully transparent. Bribery remains illegal.

Public Financing 100%:

The General election campaign begins August 15 and is funded by The US Treasury. To insure vigorous debate and diverse viewpoints for an informed electorate, the default minimum allocation of funds and media access in the current political landscape should be 40% to the Republican candidate, 40% to the Democratic candidate, 5% to the Libertarian candidate, 5% to the Green candidate, 5% to others leaning left and 5% to others leaning right. From there, if the previous two elections (averaged) garner results higher than those minimum percentages for an alternative candidate or political party, or if a major political party fades, then the new political landscape will be reflected in future elections. Alternative parties must be guaranteed a chance to fully present their case to the public so as to avoid the Tyranny of the Majority.

The Media:

Corporate media outlets have enabled and abetted the current ongoing

dismantling of the US Constitution that started with the President Clinton faux-impeachment and proceeded through the 2000 coup d'Etat and from the bring it on 911 Open Door Policy to the Iraq Invasion Fraud then on to the 2004 Mystery Questions Election and everything else inbetween. The Public Commons of channels used for TV, radio, satellite, cable and telephone have been used to cover up the incompetence and corruption of the Administration and the Republican Congress by these corporate media companies. These Traditional Big Media corporations have assisted the Administration to spy on the American people and spread fear and propaganda to help further the neocon agenda and hold on to power. Payback time.

As a requirement for a broadcasting license, all media outlets with interstate broadcast or distribution will be required to provide legislated blocks of time in all time periods to all official candidates during The General Election Campaign that begins August 15 at 12:01 a.m. Eastern time and ends on the election Sunday of November at Midnight Eastern time. Debates for President and Vice President will also be aired. The US Treasury will pay for the cost of operations. These Big Media outlets can also sell other separate airtime to political parties, candidates and independent groups at market value before and during the election - with immediate full disclosure and accounting. We should also bring a revamped Fairness Doctrine back.

Political Parties:

Any political party that garners 2% or more of the vote in a Federal General Election should receive a set minimum allocation in Federal Funds if they field a qualified candidate for the next General Election. Any candidate or political party that garners 5% or more of the votes should receive that percentage of the Federal Election Financing pie - including funds, media slots and debate opportunities. Political parties officially register with the FEC.

The Candidates:

The last five years have really underscored how important it is to get the right people into these very powerful Federal Executive offices. There is so much at stake for everyone in the country (and in the world) it is critical that competent honest people hold these positions. We have to have a good debate and air all views then conduct a fair election, count all the votes and trust the people to choose who should lead them. Candidates qualify officially by being nominated by a political party or as an independent candidate by petitioning the FEC with signatures to be on the ballot. All official candidates receive the minimum or a proportional piece of the General Election Financing pie - including funds, media slots and debate opportunity.

Special Interest Groups:

The party primaries and political conventions season should be mostly

Federally unregulated. This is when the special interests and everyone else should be able to wield their influence and then see who all is left standing at the end. However, it should not be okay to lie and deceive or defame or bribe. All contributions must be accounted for on a FEC database and ads must be transparent with full immediate disclosure. Congress must also pass more stringent oversight on lobbying activities and reform legislative earmarks. A former member of either house of Congress or the Executive branch should not be allowed to lobby Congress for five years.

Supreme Court:

Your job is to PROTECT the right to vote without discrimination or intimidation and rule that all the votes are counted. You must also make sure Congressional districts are fairly drawn to reflect the actual local demographics. The decision in 2000 by the Supreme Court to stop the vote counting in Florida will surely be one of the blackest stains in the Court's history - and by the way, you are wrong about money is free speech and corporations are people. You have much to make up for.

The Electoral College:

None of this necessarily affects the Electoral College. The database can keep a tally of how many votes came from each state for electoral votes. However, it sure would be nice to grow up and get rid of this artifact from our founding as soon as we can.

IT's 2006 - Time to Wake Up!

Most politicians are ignoring this issue, but it is URGENT that we totally reform our Federal election system and take it totally out of the hands of private corporations. The very first step is to immediately ban ALL voting machines - completely and absolutely. It is simply a fact that any computer can be hacked and manipulated. There is no such thing as perfectly secure secret software. Why are we trusting private profit driven corporations to control our elections?

The key to protecting our right to vote is to give up the Secret Ballot in favor of the Personal (and confidential) Ballot. Some say we have to have a Secret Ballot to prevent vote selling or voter intimidation. I say that those are very minor problems compared with non credible elections and private corporations counting the votes with secret operating systems. Vote buying and voter bullying being unlawful would be sufficient to discourage such things and keep it a relatively very minor problem if the laws are vigorously enforced.

Our democratic republic is in serious jeopardy from the radical right, the MoneyLenders and the corporatists. If we were smart, in 2006 we would use paper ballots - vote by hand - secure them - then hand count them with witnesses from all sides present. If we insure no intimidation or

discrimination and get a fair result, we can install the politicians who will make the necessary changes. I realize that there is little chance of these reforms actually happening - but they need to. Those who want to undermine or eliminate the democratic process in America and dumb down We the People are the real traitors.

>curtblog.com - January 8, 2006

update: November 26, 2009 - I edited the outline for clarity and it all still remains totally valid. The Dems now control both houses of Congress and The White House while the Repugs whine in the wilderness, but the left/right wing of the corporatist party remains firmly in charge.



posted by curt | [9:11 PM](#)

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