

1. Federal Reform Programs

Introduction

The Federal Reform Proposal grouping within An American Agenda addresses legislation and policies having to do with what could be considered to be administrative and management issues within our Democratic system of government. The proposals included for your consideration are:

- 1 Presidential and U.S. Representative Term Amendments
- 2 Voting Day Reform – Access to the Polls
- 3 Eligible Voter Reform
- 4 Real Campaign Finance Reform

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1 Presidential and U.S. Representative Term Amendments

Issue/Problem

This Federal proposal addresses two changes regarding terms of office of the President and Vice President of the United States and the 435 members of the US House of Representatives. This proposal does not seek to alter the existing term of office of the 100 members of the US Senate.

These changes will require two (2) amendments to the US Constitution. However, they are very straightforward and should move through Congress and the required ratification by individual state legislatures swiftly. The new terms of office that the 27th and 28th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution shall authorize, will require the term changes to be enacted retroactively in 2009, for those elected to office in the November 2008 National Election.

Why are such changes required? Simply stated all election campaigns have steadily starting earlier and thus are longer in duration, are outrageously expensive, and have resulted in decreasing productivity at the highest legislative level of our government – the US Congress. It is no surprise that as of July 2006, the Congress greater disapproval rating than Bush II. It is like worse and worsen!

We will no longer permit nor can we afford this irresponsible and counter-productive cycle to continue. Therefore, We the People will direct the Congress to make the appropriate Constitutional changes to address the problems.

The People's Sense

The President of the United States' Term of Office – Effective January 2009

The President (and VP implied) is currently allowed to serve up to two (2) consecutive terms in office of four (4) years each. Under the 27th Amendment to the US Constitution the President's term of office would be changed to a single six (6) year term. This change has received nearly unanimous support in my talks with people.

This prudent Constitutional change, will not only slow the unproductive flow of presidential campaign politics it will also make the American national political process more efficient, in general. The President would know that he or she did not have to worry about re-election and could concentrate on doing the nation's business for the vast majority of the 6 year term. The single term approach works very well at the state Governor level.

The nation would no longer need to suffer through the year-plus Presidential re-election campaigns. Not to mention the November 2008 campaign for President with a total of 18 declared candidates a full 18 months ahead of the election. So much wasted time. The 2008 presidential election is the best time to implement such a change since a new President will be elected.

The 27th Amendment is so simple and straightforward that the Congress will have an extremely difficult time confusing the issue or attempting to justify delaying its implementation. And we will be watching!

The U.S. House of Representatives' Term of Office – Effective January 2009

The US House members currently serve an “unlimited” number of two (2) year terms, as long as they can continue being reelected. The Founders did not intend for “national politician” to become a career, but that is the least of our worries.

Under the 28th Amendment to the Constitution the US House of Representatives' term of office will be changed to four (4) year terms and would remain unlimited in number, as long as they may keep being re-elected.

We will continue the practice of having all 435 members being up for re-election at once. The Senate is structured such that one third of the 100 members are up for re-election every two (2) years (i.e., 33 in 2008, 34 in 2010, 33 in 2012, and so on. There is no viable reason to bother staggering the House election in such a manner.

If *and probably* the Congress suggests “studying” that option, WE will tell the Congress not to go there. Since it would only offered as a politically motivated

delaying tactic and would conveniently take them years of study to figure out. Sort of like how “term limits” has been studied and dropped! No games will be tolerated with this.

This more efficient House term change will yield positive results for the legislative process in Congress. Currently the US House members spend entirely too much of their short 2year term fund-raising millions of dollars to run for re-election and not nearly enough time taking care of the people’s business. The fundraising distraction will be reduced allowing them more time under the Capital Dome – where they belong.

The 28th Amendment is also straight-forward and we will not tolerate legislative delay in its passage by Congress or the required state-level ratifications.

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Both of these amendments to our U.S. Constitution will be highly effective. The exact wording will not need to be much more complicated than what you have just read. This legislation will move quickly through the US Congress, as well as the required ratification by the states to be effective for the terms starting in 2009. The people of every state can let their state legislators know of their approval and to just get it done!

It will be very interesting to observe how Congress plays with these two prudent and practical changes. To guard against legislative gamesmanship these Amendments will be so written as to take effect retro-actively with the 2009 terms even if proper ratification by the states is not completed until after the 2008 election, which it most likely will not.

That’s it, short and sweet, and very beneficial to the proper functioning of our Democracy.

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Think of these as We the People’s first public *problem solutions*. These are two common sense proposals that every potential candidate for national office in 2008 would be required to clearly state their position upon. These are our first steps in changing the Status Quo of the today’s dysfunctional National System. It will be two for our side – the first legislative battles and victories in our Second and Final American Revolution.

2 Voting Day Reform – Access to the Polls

“Making it far easier for the We the People to Vote”

Issue/Problem

This Federal proposal addresses long-standing and quite avoidable procedural issues regarding our national level elections. These Democratically practical changes could rapidly “trickle down” to state, county, and local level elections, as well. The issues here boil down to date and time!

The first issue is the date-scheduling of the Presidential elections (e.g., 2008, 2014!), as well as the off-year Congressional elections (e.g., 2010, 2012). In particular, this reform will alter the day of the week in the month of November that voting occurs. The second issue addresses the hours that Polling places will be open and most importantly when they will all be required to close.

This will get hot! In general, both political parties and the lobbyists in particular will not like these publicly oriented pro-voter-access changes. The Republican Party will be more opposed than the Democratic Party, but both will most likely try to stall these reforms until the public speaks. Our revolution picks up some steam.

The People’s Sense

First, the traditional first Tuesday voting date in November will be immediately and permanently moved to the first Saturday in November. This will make it far simpler for more Americans to vote. As opposed to Tuesday, Saturday is a ‘non’ or partial workday for many of the electorate. Scheduling a trip to the polls would be far easier for many. Parents could take older kids along for the civic experience. Voters would not be rushed before or after their work commute which too often ends up in many not reaching the polls at all.

It will also make finding volunteer workers for the polls very easy.

This change will move the 2008 Presidential Election Day from Tuesday November 4th to Saturday November 1st or 11-1-08. As an added bonus for the electorate, the 2008 campaign would be shortened by three (3) whole days! What a gift.

As a note — the hotel and restaurant industries will not be happy with this change because they will lose those three (3) days of business. Hotels are already booked for those dates. All things are connected.

Second, the range of hours the polls are open will be standardized to

approximately 10 to 14 hours. Due to the **6-hour** time zone difference between the Atlantic Coast and Hawaii, the opening times could be staggered. However, the poll closing times will be **simultaneous** across all time zones from Maine and Florida, to California, as well as to Alaska and Hawaii. More Common Sense!

The number of hours the Polling places would be open could be equal across the country. Or Alaska and Hawaii could have a slightly shorter window of hours to vote. It is once every two (2) years and it will be Saturday! So the Screamers can please just hold their breath until they pass out!

Proposed Polling Schedule

A proposed schedule for the 11-1-08 Election Day with “equal” voting hours across all time zones would have polling places opening and closing as follows:

<u>Time Zone</u>	<u>Opening Time</u>	<u>Closing Time</u>	<u>#Hours Open</u>
EST Eastern	10:00 am	10:00 pm	12
CST Central	9:00 am	9:00 pm	12
MST Mountain	8:00 am	8:00 pm	12
PST Pacific	7:00 am	7:00 pm	12
AKST Alaska	6:00 am	6:00 pm	12
HAST Hawaii -Aleutian	5:00 am	5:00 pm	12
HST Hawaii	4:00 am	4:00 pm	12

This is not rocket science, folks! This incredibly simple and publicly balanced change in poll closing times will totally eliminate the potential for news services reporting East-of-the-Mississippi voting results before people out West have finished voting or have even gone to the polls. There is overwhelming support for these changes on the part of the public.

On the other hand, the political parties (and again the lobbyists that work to control both parties) will not be excited about making it much easier for a greater percentage of the electorate – the Masses to vote. That is the underlying reason why such common sense changes have not been made before or even discussed. Both parties are now accustomed to “profiling the electorate” and banking on certain percentages and types of potential voters not showing up on Election Day. They will not be happy.

These simple changes will decisively shift the Status Quo of voting in America to We the People’s favor.

No Amendment Required!

Guess what? As most people are not aware (I know I was not) that Congress has the ability to make such a change any time they want to! Go figure. Further, these changes do not require an amendment to the Constitution and only apply to Federal elections.

The states, counties, etc., make the laws regarding their respective election dates and times, but cannot interfere with Federal election administration. Now we all know. And the Plain Truth will set us free!

These realistic changes will make it dramatically easier for all Americans to get out and vote. This will result in an increased voter turnout of at least 10 to 15% which in turn will dramatically alter the Political Power structure in America. It will make politicians — starting with the 2008 campaign — far more accountable to the real concerns We the People – We citizens — that is if they want to keep their jobs!

Both of these legislative changes will need to be made and in place in time for the November 2008 Presidential/Congressional election. There can be no justifiable “excuse” why Congress cannot do this in a single afternoon.

This will be very public test of the real intent of the “535” to serve the American people and our Common Good.

Remember to ask the Presidential candidates where they stand on this issue. And in particular ask your state’s US Congressional **and state level candidates** running for re-election how soon he or she will get the changes put into law before 11-4-08!

More victories in our revolution!

3 Eligible Voter Reform

Issue/Problem

This proposal is short, but the topic is not very sweet. It speaks to the true spirit of voting rights under our Democracy.

This issue concerns what people are somewhat surprised to learn – why some American citizens are not allowed to vote in Federal and lower level elections.

Today, by law if an American citizen has been convicted of certain types of more serious crimes e.g., a felony of some sort — then fully serves their court prescribed penalty, and are then returned to society — they are too often not allowed to vote again in Federal and lower level elections.

Here is a summary of the overall situation from the website, voternewsnetwork.com.

The legal authority of a State to revoke an inmate's voting rights is based upon the **Fourteenth Amendment**. State laws on allowing convicted felons to participate in elections vary widely. Forty-eight states deny the vote to at least some felons; only Vermont and Maine let felons vote. Thirty-three states withhold the right to vote from those on parole. Eight deny felons the vote for life, unless they petition to have their rights restored, such as Alabama and Florida. New Jersey and Connecticut allow former felons to vote once they have completed parole. Nationally, about 4.2 million convicted felons cannot vote.

Thanks to them for that concise write-up.

A bothersome statistic is that of those 4.2 million citizens that approximately 1.4 are American-Black males.

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For those of you that are wondering about it, here is the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. Review Section 2 and see what you think.

AMENDMENT XIV Passed by Congress June 13, 1866. Ratified July 9, 1868

Section 1.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Section 2.

Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of Electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the executive and judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, **or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime**, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

Section 3.

No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or Elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State Legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

Section 4.

The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

Section 5.

The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the

provisions of this article.

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Currently there are activist groups across the country working state-by-state to overturn such archaic and oppressive laws and secure voting rights for these citizens in all 50 states and DC.

This un-American condition is not right and must be corrected as a matter of prudent national policy.

It was a former US Marshal that first alerted me to what he believes to be a dirty, old political game. His position and that of most people I have spoken with on the issue is that if someone does a crime and performs their court prescribed time — then they must be considered square was society and have the Right to vote in Federal elections, as well as all other levels of voting.

This situation is nothing less than a state-level “Big Brother” stepping on some of our own people, fully intending to keep them down and removed from involvement in the political system. America is better than that!

Points of Contention

There are only a few perspectives that perpetuate this type of legislated oppression:

- The narrow-minded somewhat “churchy” viewpoint is that voting should only allowed to those of good character and not those that have broken society’s laws. That is not even worth a comment.
- Another viewpoint would offer that anyone that has committed a particularly heinous crime of physical assault and/or murder and been released after serving their sentence, should never again be permitted to vote.

To that very sincere and far more publicly viable perspective I will offer that if today’s Criminal Justice System (which will be radically changed by other proposals herein) “finally” assigns a sentence to such an individual — that penalty is then fully served, and the person returned to open society – it is then proper for that individual to have the right to vote. And that is not a Liberal rationale. Like it or not they have literally paid society’s price for their crime.

That is strictly because American society represented by our currently dysfunctional the Criminal Justice System has legally passed judgment over and carried out its considered penalty on that individual. They did the

prescribed time for their crime and must again be permitted voting rights as a regular citizen.

Going forward however, it will be for us deal to “finally” deal with the perpetrators of specific freewill criminal actions involving physical and financial assault against other people and society as a whole. That publicly acceptable proposal will be reviewed shortly.

- Finally, the third viewpoint is one that deliberately supports utilizing felony level crimes to restrict the future voting rights of people in general and in some instances particular groups from voting for purely political reasons.

It is this old viewpoint that I fear and believe to be the primary reason for such laws to exist at all and continue to linger. They are a holdover from generally darker days in our political history and obviously that darkness still needs to be *illuminated*. This is a clear example of what I mean by correcting the legislative errors and sins of the past.

The People’s Sense

Not allowing someone to vote after paying their legal debt to society makes him or her feel at best a second-class citizen which does not tend to build much faith or fondness for the legal system or the government. It would tend to make them feel and speak un-favorably to others regarding the law, government, and the act of voting in general. This will all be corrected and avoided in the future.

This is an abusive situation where “States Rights” has a negative impact on the Common Good. And it must be confronted and resolved. The legislative battle to end this Voting Rights atrocity that is being waged on a state-by-state basis needs to be resolved by the U.S. Congress in one simple act!

The Congress, 50 State Governors, and the DC Mayor will confer together to rapidly develop and enact the simple and required legislation. It must be in effect for the 2008 election to insure Voting Rights at the Federal level – at least — for all persons that have served their court prescribed penalty and returned to open society. This will include those that are released and serving out their probation period, if any. If someone is out of prison – they can vote even if they are liable for many years of follow-up probation.

It is a simple matter of treating our citizens correctly. States Rights can no longer be used to suppress the Voting Rights of our citizens. It is the proper action of a maturing Democracy, as well as being the civil and decent thing to do.

That is all that should need to be said of this. Let us get it fixed!

The Second Coming of Common Sense

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4 Real Campaign Finance Reform

Issue/Problem

The public's need to prudently reform election campaign fund-raising is nothing new. Real campaign finance reform is about the struggle to control the excessive and imbalanced influence of the Special Interest money that is pouring into national elections. The same can be said for the state election process, as well.

The end result of this well-funded influence on American politics over the last several decades is that the same men and women keep getting re-elected to high, public offices. The same predictable, Congressional members that the Special Interest lobbyists are so used to 'dealing' with to get what they want. The lobbyists help them keep getting re-elected and in turn the members of Congress either keep certain legislation from reaching a vote or know how to vote when the right Bill is sent to the Floor. It is part of today's "Old Boy and Old Girl System" of the U.S. Congress.

Point of Reference

In a version of the *Merriam-Webster* International Dictionary the word 'bribe' is defined as follows:

1 : a price, reward, gift, or favor bestowed or promised with a view to pervert the judgment or corrupt the conduct esp. of a person in a position of trust (as a public official)

Right out of the book!

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It is the Plain Truth of "purchased" political influence and how it is used to not only influence, but direct and control national policy and legislative decisions. Obvious examples of this real influence are:

- The Bush II first term National Energy Policy that was developed behind closed doors with the Energy Industry lobbyists – with the Big Oil leading the way, assisted by the Natural Gas and Coal industries.
- The Medicare Reform legislation that the Medical and Pharmaceutical industries helped Congress write, that did not favor the Masses. See the movie, *Sicko*.
- The Pharmaceutical industry successfully lobbying to make it illegal for Americans to buy the same medications in Canada and Mexico at a far cheaper price.

- The Banking industry successfully pushing through the Bankruptcy Reform Act late one night.
- The continued lack of enforcement of existing Immigration Control Policy and the Congressional refusal to strengthen it for at least critical, national security reasons. Remember that seven (7) more years of no action under Bush II is a daily victory for more millions of Illegal Occupants over the Majority will of the American Public — and for those businesses that want cheap labor to keep right on coming.
- The continued delay in building a Southern Border Fence. The creative Congress ‘succeeded’ in approving funds for a 700 mile fence to cover a 2000 land border. That is not even a half-a_____ solution. And where is that partial fence?
- The continued existence of a failed and publicly, destructive ‘joke’ of a National Drug Policy. That for instance keeps the non-addictive, medically proven, and God-given cannabis (marijuana) plant illegal to please the Pharmaceutical industry. And at the same time Congress has never tried to make *nicotine* the *most addictive* and regularly used drug in the nation illegal, to keep the Tobacco and Medical industries happy. Over the last forty (40) years, Tobacco has only killed some 18,000,000 Americans — and pot a total of zero.
- The absolutely out-of-control Defense industry, i.e., the Military Industrial Complex. See the movie, *Why We Fight*.

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It is our reasonable Right and Expectation under American Democracy for the Legislative Branch of government to serve the People and our Common Good. This is not happening in a growing number of critical areas. Rather the U.S. Congress is being influenced and directed by persons representing only certain industries and their stockholders – and in some cases other entities such as the Oil producing countries of the world.

And the High Court

Speaking of Judicial Branch, the U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled in opposition to such funding controls. It could be observed as a ruling that honored “The Law” and completely ignored the Democratic Reason and *common sense*. I say the control and prevention of the abuse of political Power by the Few over the Many is exactly what the US Constitution is all about.

The Court needs to re-consider the People’s Rights and move to require practical, Democratic reforms in campaign finance laws that are designed to control, if not eliminate such obvious abuse of power and influence over the Common Good of the Masses.

The People's Sense

Since Congress is unwilling and/or unable to control itself and stop serving those not so interested in the Common Good, We the People must now act to correct the obvious abuses of Power. Any such reforms will of course wait until after the 2008 election season. However, that does not mean We will not bring it up as candidates for President and Congress seek our votes during the 2008 campaign. Yes, We will!

A Few Thoughts

As a public over-sight authority the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) strictly monitors and maintains very detailed accounting on the source of contributions to political campaigns at the Federal level for Congress and for the Office of the President. The FEC sourced data is open for public information inquiries and a good deal of these figures are to be found today on the Internet (www.FEC.gov) during the campaigns.

We could simply review the total contributions donated by industries, associations, and other non-individual citizen entities, from highest to lowest. We could then determine how far down those list to go and either limit or totally restrict future donations from that source to political candidates and parties for some period of years — if not permanently.

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We could develop a list of “special interest” entities, mainly industries that would be generally prohibited from contributing to Federal level campaigns — entities that have proven by their deliberate, free will actions to place their interests over the Common Good of the People, society, and the National System. Things could get pretty intense as those entities fight to stay off of that list. An example of a few entities that would easily head that list today are:

- Medical Insurance Industry
- Pharmaceutical Industry
- Tobacco Industry
- Energy Industry — Oil, in particular, as well as Coal and Natural Gas
- Banking Industry
- Credit Card Industry
- Investment House Industry
- Defense Industry, i.e., the Military Industrial Complex

CS2 will be addressing most of those critical industries in Part 3 – An American Agenda. Therein, We will review the proposed re-structuring of six (6) of

existing industries that are currently doing the National System, the American People (us), and our society far more harm than good. As a practical by-product of those non-optional, restructurings the predatory lobbying practices of those industries will be neutralized, if not fully eliminated!

In the final analysis, since We cannot stop certain profit seeking corporations from having their self-serving way with our lives and the nation's economic health — We will simply have our way with them, to Preserve and Serve the Common Good. It is our Democratic Right, because it is our country!

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In spite of the half-hearted attempts by Congress to implement Campaign Finance reform, the money spent on national campaigns only increases as already evidenced in 2007 and early 2008. For example, over forty (40) millions dollars spent in Iowa before the January 3rd Caucus. Iowa only has a population of about 3 million!

Without question and regrettably, this publicly prudent and practical legislation is absolutely necessary when such a *damaging and dangerous* imbalance exists between the Common Good of the Masses, and the self-interested Few that are imposing a disproportionate amount of influence and control over the political system and our lives!

Real Campaign Finance Reform line laws and spending limits must be imposed. The simple details of which will be aired out in public, with *hard target deadlines* for viable legislation to be enacted and then enforced. That way the public may be provided the details of the legislation, embrace them, and see them put into law for the 2010 campaign, and beyond.

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