

Rockville Centre Democratic Club Talking Points

September 26, 2017

The following NY Times OPED attracted 1620 reader comments, and those comments received many thousands of endorsements by other readers. Below, following the article, we have included the top 100 reader comments.

If we are to truly have a democratic government, we must insist upon truly democratic elections, fairly drawn election districts, accessible voting for all who are entitled to vote, and results that mirror the actual vote.

The original of the article and all of the comments can be read [here](#).

Tyranny of the Minority

Michelle Goldberg

[New York Times](#) – September 25, 2017

This is Michelle Goldberg's [debut column](#).

Since Donald Trump's cataclysmic election, the unthinkable has become ordinary. We've grown used to naked [profiteering](#) off the presidency, an administration that calls for the [firing](#) of private citizens for political dissent and nuclear diplomacy conducted via Twitter [taunts](#). Here, in my [debut as a New York Times columnist](#), I want to discuss a structural problem that both underlies and transcends our current political nightmare: We have entered a period of minority rule.

I don't just mean the fact that Trump became president despite his decisive loss in the popular vote, though that shouldn't be forgotten. Worse, the majority of voters who disapprove of Trump have little power to force Congress to curb him.

A combination of gerrymandering and the tight clustering of Democrats in urban areas means that even if Democrats get significantly more overall votes than Republicans in the midterms — which polls show is probable — they may not take

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back the House of Representatives. (According to a Brookings Institution [analysis](#), in 2016, Republicans won 55.2 percent of seats with just under 50 percent of votes cast for Congress.)

And because of [the quirks](#) of the 2018 Senate map, Democrats are extremely unlikely to reclaim that chamber, even if most voters would prefer Democratic control. Some analysts have even [suggested](#) that Republicans could emerge from 2018 with a filibuster-proof 60-seat majority.

Our Constitution has always had a small-state bias, but the effects have become more pronounced as the population discrepancy between the smallest states and the largest states has grown. “Given contemporary demography, a little bit less than 50 percent of the country lives in 40 of the 50 states,” Sanford Levinson, a constitutional law scholar at the University of Texas, told me. “Roughly half the country gets 80 percent of the votes in the Senate, and the other half of the country gets 20 percent.”

The distortion carries over to the Electoral College, where each state’s number of electors is determined by the size of its congressional delegation. This would matter less if the United States weren’t so geographically polarized. But America is now two countries, eyeing each other across a chasm of distrust and contempt. One is urban, diverse and outward-looking. This is the America that’s growing. The other is white, provincial and culturally revanchist. This is the America that’s in charge.

Twice in the last 17 years, Republicans have lost the popular vote but won the presidency, and it could happen again. In July, Senator Sherrod Brown [told](#) The Washington Post, “It’s not out of the question that in 2020, if nothing changes, Democrats could win the popular vote by five million and lose the Electoral College because of the Great Lakes states.” He meant that as a warning to Democrats to pay attention to the Midwest. But it could just as easily be taken as a warning about the stability of our democracy.

I recently had the chance to ask Gov. Jerry Brown of California what might happen if we have more elections like 2016, where a majority of voters and a supermajority of Californians are thwarted. Polls already show a third of Californians favor secession. Could that fringe movement become mainstream? Brown said it was “not beyond the realm of possibility” that the country could eventually break apart, even if he doesn’t think it’s likely.

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Conservatives are often unmoved by complaints that our system is undemocratic, arguing that America was intended not as a democracy but a republic. But if this was true at the founding, it's probably not how most Americans understand their country today, when "undemocratic" is considered a political epithet.

Before Trump, there was enough overlap between popular will and electoral outcome to make the issue largely semantic. Now it's existential. Certainly, we need checks on the tyranny of the majority. But what we have now is the tyranny of the minority.

There are ways out.

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact — a plan in which states agree to award all their electoral votes to the national popular vote winner — could circumvent the Electoral College if enough states enacted it.

Don Beyer, a Democratic representative from Virginia, has introduced the Fair Representation Act, which would change the way the House is elected, replacing single-member districts with larger districts represented by several people. They'd be chosen by a system of ranked voting that would allow third parties to compete without becoming spoilers, while giving political minorities a say in the process. The resulting delegations, Beyer told me, would be more likely to be proportional, creating space for Massachusetts Republicans as well as Oklahoma Democrats.

Enactment of either of these plans, which would transform the ways we choose our leaders, is remote. But absent reform, our system could eventually face a legitimacy crisis. Levinson, perhaps the most prominent among progressive critics of the Constitution, argues that the crisis is already here: "At some point we need to discuss the extent to which the entire constitutional system is full of these anti-majoritarian aspects."

Trump's election has revealed many dark truths about this country. One of them is: We're a lot less democratic than we might think.

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**The top 100 reader comments to the foregoing article:**

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Steve

[21 hours ago](#)

Our popular mythology likes to tell us that the constitutional convention was a series of brilliant compromises that leads to a perfectly balanced system. But read the history of it and you'll see that the large states considered the compromise giving equal representation to the small states in the Senate to be an absolutely bitter pill to swallow.

There's nothing brilliant about it at all. It gives a voter in Wyoming 67 times the power in the Senate as someone in California. I've been to Wyoming many times. The people there are nice. But there is no reason that they should have that much political power.

- 1755 Recommend

John

*is a trusted commenter* Newton, Mass [20 hours ago](#)

Fine, but then why do we in Massachusetts have to subsidize the red states? Because that's exactly what's happening. They say we make fun of their values, but they make fun of ours, while also eating from our tables. They don't want government to leave them alone -- they want government to actively favor white people and Evangelical Christianity. That's why they voted for Trump. I say this as somebody who moved to MA from the deep South. I know what and who I'm talking about.

- In Reply to Jonathan
- 1425 Recommend

hen3ry

*is a trusted commenter* Westchester County, NY [20 hours ago](#)

Trump's election has revealed the extent to which the GOP has taken over the country even as a majority of voters disagree with their politics. It also revealed how incompetent and unresponsive the GOP is when it comes to the lives of ordinary Americans. The only people that the GOP is interested in are their donors whether they are rich or big corporations. The rest of us are nowhere to be found in their consciousness. As long as we have the Electoral College it's not one person one vote. The same goes for the amount of gerrymandering.

There is another not so savory thing that Trump's election has revealed about America: we do not believe in equality, compassion, or charity. We are racist, anti-intellectual, and selfish to the point of destruction. If we continue to elect representatives who refuse to allocate money to run the country, improve our infrastructure, or do what's necessary

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we will become a backwater which is not what our Founding Fathers wanted or expected.

- 1036 Recommend

Joe P.

Maryland [20 hours ago](#)

This was one of the best articles I've read on our current state of affairs. A point by point analysis, and some offered solutions. let's get to work.

- 891 Recommend

Susan Fitzwater

Ambler, PA [20 hours ago](#)

"Prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and all experience hath accordingly shown that mankind is more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable than to change the forms to which they have become accustomed.

"BUT. . . ."

That from the Declaration of Independence. Are we drifting along, coming close to that BUT--the sense our democracy, our government simply doesn't work any more? Are we approaching Jefferson's "long train of abuses and usurpations"? And if so--what then?

I am sixty eight years old, Ms. Goldberg, and I am SCARED. I have never seen the nation like this. I have never seen a President like this. I have never dreamed a U.S. Congress could so openly, so flagrantly disregard the good of the nation while grasping at transitory partisan advantages. I never dreamed so many TROLLS--the ugly people!--the screamers!--the bigots!--could come crawling (as it were) out of the woodwork. I never. . . .

. . .oh by the way. Welcome aboard, Ms. Goldberg. I wish you the best.

I wish our country the best.

We'll see how the two of you do.

Please take care.

- 843 Recommend

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*NYT Pick*

Steve G

Bellingham wa [7 hours ago](#)

California has a population of 39.25 million, and has two senators. Montana, Idaho, N Dakota, S Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma have a combined population of 24.46 million people and have between them 22 senators. Are you starting to see the problem? This is not representative government! Federalism never really made sense, except insofar as it was the only way to create the union. Even then it was the larger more populated states giving way to the smaller for the greater good. This article is raising the question as to whether the now vastly larger states are still willing to give way to the smaller for the greater good. Since the far right is absolutely refusing any efforts at bi-partisanship (The ACA is a 90s Republican plan, and in his first term Obama was even willing to have Social Security on the negotiating table). Myself, if the far right, which dominates in these small states, continues to destroy the country that I love, I'd just as soon jettison the whole thing. I'm not there yet, but I really can't take much more. That is what this article is talking about. How long will the majority agree to put up with this nonsense.

- In Reply to CreatingValue
- 726 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

Ilona

Europe [8 hours ago](#)

I was one of those who actually wrote to my electors for my state asking them to vote for the winner of the popular vote and was told by many that we live in a Republic, not a democracy. Perhaps I am young and naive but I stared at those words for a long time feeling utterly deceived. In school we learned we lived in the world's greatest democracy, and I'd always believed it. Now, I know we don't live in the greatest democracy, and unless we put a stop to gerrymandering and change the process by which we elect a republic, I'm not sure we can say we live in a democracy at all. I am currently living in Europe and I'm afraid I have to concur with the increasing number of people who have been telling me they no longer look to the US as an example of how democracy works but rather how it can fail.

- 723 Recommend

Regina Baldwin

Fair Haven,NJ [20 hours ago](#)

The only question this opinion raises in my mind is why did it take a first time opinion contributor to raise something that should be at the forefront of our political debate. Not

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only does the minority rule, it seems to me that the Republican majority in both houses are not particularly concerned with that minority either.

- 707 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

Barbara Chen

Richland, Washington [8 hours ago](#)

While some commenters point out the difference between a democracy and a republic, the critical question is whether our system is sustainable given recent demographic shifts and gerrymandering. I truly fear it is not. If a large majority feels wronged in its most primal sense of fairness, this won't end well. Telling people it's fair won't help. Our system is not "proven" by world historical standards. Our republic is very young, and fragile. Just visit Rome for a little perspective.

But just as critical as gerrymandering is the chokehold that the Koch brothers and their ilk have on the GOP. Until we overturn Citizens United and have our presidents elected by actual people instead of corporations, this won't be either a republic or a democracy.

The Russians I'm sure will be pleased that the comments here don't even acknowledge the size of their influence on us and our thinking. They carefully sowed seeds of chaos and division, which we then amplified through social media and special gems like Alex Jones. Oh, did I forget DJT?

- 647 Recommend

Sanjay

NYC area [19 hours ago](#)

Ms. Goldberg, welcome to The New York Times! Your debut article is apropos, and covers an essential ethos in these troubling times. Yes indeed, our democracy is not so democratic.

You close with a truism: "We're a lot less democratic than we think."

Here's another truism: "We're a lot less educated than we think."

So:

Low democracy + Low education = a powder-keg waiting for just a spark.

- 592 Recommend

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siobhan

portland, or [19 hours ago](#)

I worked at a polling station this past election. It was heartening to see so many people turn out to vote. My role was to greet them. There were people of all ages - from teenaged first-time voters to senior citizens. There were people in wheel chairs. There was a young man with Down Syndrome. There were women wearing headscarves. There was a woman who was homeless. There were veterans from each war. There were people whose first language was Amharic and Farsi and Japanese. There were a few people who smelled of pot. There were elderly African Americans who had lived under Jim Crow laws. There were children there too. So many people brought their children to watch them vote. I greeted them all and answered their questions. The last person in line at my polling station waited three hours to vote.

The people who worked with me at the polling station were Republicans, Democrats, Greens, Libertarians and Unaffiliated Independents. We worked in teams and each team had representatives from different parties to guarantee impartiality.

It was a beautiful experience to greet so many of my fellow Americans and welcome them to vote. I have never been so proud of being American than I was that day.

Clinton received over 2.5 million more votes - from real people - than Trump. How could we not count these votes? That is effectively disenfranchising over 2,500,000 Americans.

We need to do everything possible so what happened this past presidential election never happens again.

- 520 Recommend

Deb Paley

NY, NY [20 hours ago](#)

Good job, and this is a topic that needs a lot of attention. Thanks for starting the conversation, for this reader anyway. What is the process by which this could change?

- 495 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

stan continople

brooklyn [8 hours ago](#)

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Even with the most demographically representative system imaginable, we would not have a true democracy because of the influence of money. Aside from the fact that the GOP majority is an artifact of several undemocratic features, the party itself does not represent its supposed constituency. Polls showed that a majority of Republicans emphatically did not want any of the health care measures passed yet that did not deter the party leaders, who felt it necessary to keep even their supporters in the dark. What we actually see, also on the Democratic side, is a political process where the voter's input ends as soon as they pull the lever for their candidate. That is their one and only, mainly symbolic, function. After that, their influence on policy is nil and they are reduced to being either impotent spectators or flailing cheerleaders, while in fancy suites the donors do the dictating.

- 490 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

Laura Benton

Tillson, New York [8 hours ago](#)

"But America is now two countries, eyeing each other across a chasm of distrust and contempt."

This is the most salient fact. Our "president" has us at each other's throats, and relishes the spectacle.

I am not convinced this division is entirely the product of a flawed political system. External forces contributed and have, sadly, terrifyingly, prevailed.

A broken America is a weakened America, and truly, we will not stand divided.

No matter our differences, we ARE stronger together. Whatever we do to correct our political system, we must find a way to resurrect this most fundamentally American ideal.

Excellent column.

- 473 Recommend

Boarat of NYC

NYC [20 hours ago](#)

The problem of the Electoral College is the refusal to expand the House of Representative to properly reflect population growth for the past 100 years. In 1920 the Republicans refused to expand the number of Representatives in the House for the first

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time in our country's history. It has been frozen ever since.

If the number of Representatives in the House is increased by 100% the electoral weight in larger states would be more balance against smaller states.

I don't know why this issue cannot be pursued through litigation in the Federal courts.

- 439 Recommend

Lynn

*is a trusted commenter* New York [20 hours ago](#)

A majority of voters chose Obama.

Millions more voters chose Democrats than Republicans, but due to 2010 gerrymandering the Republicans controlled the House and, with that control, would not even bring a bill to a vote on the floor unless a majority of Republicans supported it.

In other words, even if a majority of the people in Congress would vote for the bill, and it would pass, the Republicans would not let it come up for a vote. That is why comprehensive immigration reform, passed in a bipartisan way in the Senate, stalled in the House. That's why there was no infrastructure bill or a larger follow on stimulus even though the majority of Americans supported it.

When the Democrats controlled the Senate, a majority voted to overrule Citizens United, for universal background checks, and to allow younger people to buy into Medicare, The Republican minority blocked it with a filibuster.

The point is that Elections should have consequences that match the will of the voters. If you don't believe in that, you don't believe in democracy, much like, apparently, your fellow Republicans

- In Reply to g
- 403 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

Reader

Westchester [6 hours ago](#)

I've noticed when people complain about "identity politics" they are almost always white, straight and male. White, straight males abound in every area- from politics to business, and yet they consistently whine that those of us who are not that are "forgetting them."

Well we liberals haven't forgotten them. We are the ones whose tax dollars support

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them. In every state, liberal cities see their tax dollars go to red rural areas. We liberal blue states keep seeing our federal tax dollars go to red states.

The Republican base constantly tries to interfere with my civil rights, while simultaneously expecting me to bail them out for making the same mistakes over and over again. You want a different world view? Fine. Stop attacking my rights and taking my money.

- In Reply to Ron Cohen
- 387 Recommend

Chris

DC [16 hours ago](#)

What I find most odd about how power is distributed in this nation is that the the most populous states in the nation not only tend to be blue, but that they are also the economic power houses of the nation as well. They are the surplus states that get back less in federal funding than what they give over in federal taxes. And it is the surplus, progressive blue states that are largely funding the deficit red states in the true grand scheme of 'economic redistribution,' a term, may I add, so often invoked with a snarl by red state politicians. We all think money talks in our politics, but apparently when it comes to how the federal government gets funded - and who does the funding - the biggest players are increasingly bound and gagged. Those states who have been most successful in building economies that serve a large, diverse and predominantly progressive-voting populations have less and less to say about the nation is run, while red states living off blue state largesse get disproportionately more say . My point, simply: the imbalance in we see overtaking the country it isn't just about disproportionate representation; it's economic as well. And I've a notion this is where the true break will come.

- 387 Recommend

Edward Allen

Spokane Valley, WA [20 hours ago](#)

Welcome to the Times, Ms. Goldberg. I have been reading you for years at Slate, where you will be missed.

After the election of Trump I realized two things. The first is that any notion I had that America was "good" as Hillary Clinton said were shattered. We are not "good" by almost any definition of the word. The second is that it was obvious that we were no longer in a Democracy in any real sense.

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We are at a crossroads. On the one hand, our institutions are remarkably strong. On the other hand, how much longer can they remain strong? If we have another minority president in 2020, expect California to take steps to distance themselves from the federal government.

- 361 Recommend

EDK

Boston [20 hours ago](#)

Excellent debut column! However, another of the "dark truth" about this country is how many, many people are so easily fooled by a con-man. Disgraceful!

- 263 Recommend

L

Seattle [19 hours ago](#)

California knows the way out. The midwest and South are sick of us coastal elites leeching off of their huge industrial profits. Time to show ourselves out. California has an ally in Cascadia.

Maybe we don't even need to secede. After all, why would such a rich area as Alabama want to continue supporting "urban" losers like those of us in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles?

The idea that this country will ever give full voting rights to "urban" populations is a joke. As long as we don't have direct elections, we won't have real democracy in the United States.

- 242 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

James K. Lowden

New York City [7 hours ago](#)

When will Republicans learn they don't speak for the majority?

We might agree the Democratic Party lost its way decades ago when it abandoned populism for neoliberalism. But to the complaint that both Gore and Clinton won the popular vote, I've read too many smug replies to the effect that liberals should just get over it. Yeah, it's legal, we get that. But it's also anti-majoritarian. We live in a so-called democracy where being in the majority isn't good enough.

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Republican leadership, by the way, is keenly aware their policies are unpopular. Look at the secrecy with which they conducted votes on healthcare, with virtually no hearings, at least the secrecy of the tax plan. That, and they just lie and dissemble about who benefits and what the effects are. It's not hard to find Republicans currently asserting the tax cuts will pay for themselves in economic growth, never mind that's been tried and failed before, every time, as economics predicted.

Too many Republicans are Republicans simply because they feel rejected or not heard or disdained by Democrats. That's their mistake, even if it's the Democrats' mistake too.

As Bill Clinton said, "our way works better". Maybe, if Democrats take up truly universal healthcare and promote it as a popular cause, no few Republicans will support them, and we can throw the bums out.

- In Reply to Thomas A.
- 237 Recommend

Panthiest

U.S. [19 hours ago](#)

We need to get rid of the Electoral College.

- 234 Recommend

Donald Ambrose

Florida [20 hours ago](#)

Great article. Perhaps a focus on Civics, History( not just the Civil War, Vietnam , and the Revolutionary War), Social Studies. We have too many ignorant people who take things fro granted and we wind up with a fraud like Trump.

Trump got elected because he lied about everything and the population is too stupid and lazy to know the difference. Did they care that 3 bankruptcies, 3 wives, multiple business failures, sleazy business practices , questionable associates, and an all around boor would cause one to doubt? NO! He will take care of everything. So here we are Grifter in Chief, Pathological Liar, Swindler et al .

- 224 Recommend

Bruce Rozenblit

*is a trusted commenter* Kansas City, MO [17 hours ago](#)

Good article and welcome. Currently the party that is benefitting greatly from our undemocratic electoral system is the party in power. How in the world are we going to

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get the party in power to change the rules which may cause them to lose power? Won't happen.

Well we could convince people to vote to overthrow the party in power. How can we convince them if the only information they are exposed to is nothing but a pack of lies and propaganda? These people will not even entertain the thought of watching PBS or reading this paper. It's Fox or its nothing.

I do see hope at the end of a very long tunnel. The median age of the Fox News viewer is 68 and steadily trending higher. That crowd is dying off. The under 30 crowd is not in Fox's back pocket. In fact, they don't even watch news on TV. Their world is streamed to them on their phones. They are also very culturally liberal and reject the racism and anti-gay positions of many older Fox viewers.

We might be able to wait out the plague. Unfortunately, the disease carriers have elected an insane demagogue to the White House who is doing his best to blow up the world. If he gets his way, some of us won't make to the end of the tunnel. Sadly, that sort of pain may be exactly what it will take to get them to change their votes. Reason, the facts and the truth don't seem to be making much difference.

- 219 Recommend

L

Seattle [19 hours ago](#)

They don't receive services from the federal government? Is this sarcasm?

- In Reply to Jonathan
- 213 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

Jonathan Micocci

St Petersburg, FL [6 hours ago](#)

Thank you for pointing out the elephant in the room! In the Senate, a Wyoming voter has 64 times more clout than a California voter. The Founders accepted that there would be differences, but apparently they just didn't imagine (or care) that it could become this lopsided.

The Electoral College is an absurdity, which can only be defended with the same self-serving non-logic Republicans apply to tax cuts for the wealthy. They don't seem concerned that this door can swing both ways...it's about winning this battle this moment, clinging to undeserved power at any cost.

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Please keep solutions in the public eye. It's stunning how no-hoper ideas have made it to the mainstream in recent years.....good ones and tragically bad ones...everything's on the table now.

- 210 Recommend

Laura B

NYC [20 hours ago](#)

The whole country is going to be reshuffling a bit because of climate change. It would be REALLY SMART of Demcorats to start planning for those migrations and getting jobs and housing built for, say, Irma victims. Build those enticements in light red states and flip them. Democrats in NYC should retire to Montana and Ohio and change their registration.

Basically, liberals, go colonize those red states.

- 196 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

artistcon3

New Jersey [7 hours ago](#)

The Fair Representation Act sounds sane and effective. It would help rid us of the two party system, which is a horrible idea for reasoned debate. But how will this ever pass? In order to pass it, you need Congress to vote on it and the Republicans in Congress will never vote for this. And, as you mention, because of gerrymandering and current laws, we'll keep getting the same people elected over and over again. I think secession is actually the only reasonable route out of this problem. Would a smaller United States actually be such a bad thing if the Blue states got together and realized how much better their lives could be if they could enact their own legislation? It would ease so much tension in this country. It's a cultural in addition to being a political morass, and with or without new regulations, there is such a wide cultural divide that I don't think it can ever be repaired.

- 195 Recommend

John

*is a trusted commenter* Newton, Mass [20 hours ago](#)

The "loony left". LOL. I guess that's why the stock market climbed throughout Obama's administration, along with real estate values.

- In Reply to g

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- 179 Recommend

ChristineMcM

*is a trusted commenter* Massachusetts [19 hours ago](#)

Michelle, you make good points but sound as if we're not there yet--e.g., the tyranny of the minority.

To which I strongly disagree. I believe we are at the point of no return. There are simply too many billionaires who have an outsized impact on electoral results and the preservation of the status quo.

The GOP has already proved that they can get enough voters to vote against their self interest and enable Republicans to maintain power way into the coming years.

And the solutions you propose about changing the electoral college or or system of voter apportionment you yourself said have scant chance of getting passed.

Because once you have power and find it so easy to manipulate your voter base, as Donald Trump does, then you have this tyranny of the minority.

I don't think Russia is our problem--I think it's ourselves. I hate writing this but it really is a catch-22. To change things you'd have to roll back the clock. It's like global warming--once you pass the tipping point, there's no going back to where we were.

- 153 Recommend

r

NYC [17 hours ago](#)

what an absolutely brilliant first column.

to keep the country whole (where unity makes us stronger than individual effort) we need to rethink how the minority adversely affects our entire process. while the proposals seem enticing, maybe the first step is getting rid of gerrymandering and have independent committees set up the voting districts. one way or another, the system that has allowed this baffoon to be elected has to change...

- 152 Recommend

Kevin

Amherst, MA [20 hours ago](#)

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Beautifully reasoned and written debut. Welcome!

- 121 Recommend

Ann

*is a trusted commenter* California [11 hours ago](#)

Actually the rural folks do receive a lot of governmental services.

- In Reply to Jonathan
- 117 Recommend

E. Rodriguez

New York, NY [19 hours ago](#)

Great maiden column. I say we're in need of a divorce. All the blue states can take their economic heft and their tax dollars and leave the red leech states to rot.

I'm sure all those Kansas tax cuts are going to produce an economic miracle any day now...

- 112 Recommend

JEA

SLC [8 hours ago](#)

John raises an important point. Not only do democrats in urban areas give up their vote to rural republicans, they subsidize them financially. This situation is not sustainable. not only is their vitriol making my life miserable (urban democrat), I am footing the bill? That is not sustainable. Sounds a lot like taxation without representation.

- In Reply to Jonathan
- 110 Recommend

Pamela Feiring

Manhattan NY [20 hours ago](#)

Excellent first op-ed

- 108 Recommend

Harpo

Toronto [18 hours ago](#)

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The problem is that the writers of the Constitution provided a balance for the world they lived in, influenced by the outcome of the revolution. They failed to call for periodic assessment of the system and automatic corrections for arbitrariness to restore fairness. The greatest injustice is that McConnell was able to use the resulting electoral imbalance to thwart the constitutional process of nominating a justice to the Supreme Court. If the majority is subjected to the whims of the minority, how can the entity survive?

- 105 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

Jon Harrison

Poultney, VT [6 hours ago](#)

If I remember correctly, Bill Clinton was twice elected president with less than 50 percent of the popular vote. Did his presidency constitute undemocratic, minority rule?

Trump defeated Clinton by 1.5 million votes in the 49 states outside of California. Should California have so much power that it outweighs a majority in the other 49 states?

Trump carried 30 of 50 states. Would it be more democratic if the winner in only 20 states became president?

I'm no Trump supporter, but the arguments in this column are for the most part tiresome left-wing whining about the fact that someone the Left despises was elected president. Get your voters out. You have a majority base, but many of them simply couldn't be bothered to get off the couch and vote for Clinton. Try nominating a candidate better than a prepackaged, neoliberal, corporate pol.

On Congress the author is on much stronger ground. Hopefully the rigged, gerrymandered system we now have will be changed. There is actually bipartisan support for this, and one should applaud the Republican supporters of reform in particular, as they are putting country above party.

- 101 Recommend

Rita

*is a trusted commenter* California [19 hours ago](#)

What 70 years of peace are you talking about????

- In Reply to Someone

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- 
- 100 Recommend

Ann

*is a trusted commenter* California [12 hours ago](#)

The GOP has long waged a systemic vote suppression and voter disenfranchisement tactics including: 1-Gut key provisions of the Voting Rights Act; 2-Aggressively redistrict and gerrymander districts to limit Dems winning seats (Salon Mag: "Operation Red Map"); 3-Pass onerous voter ID rules targeting poor, elderly, minority voters; 4-Close TENS of thousands of polling sites + reduce poll hours and days; 5-Send voters to the wrong places to vote; 6-Install fewer, broken and non-functioning machines in Dem-leaning districts; 7-Underfund districts, run out of ballots; 8-Practice outright voter intimidation and vote caging; 9-Shunt voters to provisional ballots without proof they will be counted; 10-Use well-known insecure voting software/machines that can be hacked to flip, lose votes; 11-Purge 1.1+ million mostly minorities from voter rolls in 28 GOP-controlled states through "Crosscheck" (Kevin Kobach); 12-Veto measures that would enroll millions who apply for or renew their drivers license; 13-Legalize methods to prevent votes from being tracked, fail to secure votes, and keep count methods secret; 14-Use expensive lawsuits to fight a recount or actual results in court; 15- Allow voting systems and tabulation software to be privatized; 15- Refuse to investigate Russian hacking validated by 17 U.S. intel agencies and order forensics to determine how 21+ states election systems were breached; 16- Refuse to fund cybersecurity infrastructure updates needed to protect the vote.

- 96 Recommend

dadof2

nj [10 hours ago](#)

Welcome! You've addressed an issue I've long been concerned about. But Mr. Levinson is wrong: the disproportional representation in the Senate is far, far worse than he indicates. I've run the arithmetic myself from the various states' population figures. The ten largest states, California, Texas, Florida, NY, etc, represent about 54% of the population, but only have 20 Senate seats.

The smallest 26 states, red and blue, which control an absolute majority of the Senate seats, 52, represent just under 18% of the population! 18% of the country controls an absolute majority of the Senate!

The other 14 states representing 28 Senate seats represents about 28% of the population, which is what would be fair.

A Senator from Wyoming, the smallest state, has the same vote as a Senator from California. One represents about 500,000, the other, 38-39 MILLION!

And many far Right Republicans have broached repealing the 17th amendment,

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allowing state legislatures, where the GOP is totally dominant, to select Senators, which would give them close to, if completely, a veto-proof majority.

We have been teetering on the brink of tyranny since the Gingrich takeover in 1994, and the attempted plan THEN to craft a "perpetual majority" by freezing out ANY donors from access to the GOP majority who gave Democrats any money at all, but it didn't work. Still, one party has been working steadily towards one-party rule. That is tyranny, and destroys freedom because there is no accountability.

- 93 Recommend

Jonathan Baker

New York City [16 hours ago](#)

A hearty welcome to Michelle Goldberg. An incisive and welcome column.

"Conservatives are often unmoved by complaints that our system is undemocratic, arguing that America was intended not as a democracy but a republic."

Conservatives just don't get this: a republic is a democracy without a monarch. England is a democracy but also has a ceremonial monarch so it is not a republic. But both England and the USA are democracies, and the words democracy and republic both signify governments elected by the citizens.

If conservatives had more respect for words as conveyors of knowledge rather than deceptive slogans they would know that already.

- 87 Recommend

Paul Smith

Austin, TX [17 hours ago](#)

Good points. Many of us who thought we lived in a democracy would welcome changes to the electoral system to make that a reality. If the Supreme Court rules political gerrymandering unconstitutional, it will be a step in the right direction.

- 81 Recommend

C Grant

Toronto [20 hours ago](#)

For anyone interested in learning more on this topic, I am currently midread of Nancy MacLean's 'Democracy In Chains' In it, she lays out the history of this anti-majority

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political movement--from Calhoun through its modern father James Buchanan up to the Koch machine threatening democracy in order to 'save' capitalism. Much of what she reveals confirms the suspicion that there is something insidious operating to harm and suppress democratic progress in the United States. The only way to turn back these assaults is to learn and understand their goals, strategy, and tactics. It isn't a coup d'état of globalists and Zionists and Annunaki---it is your own fellow citizens grasping for more wealth and power....or as they call it 'liberty'

- 79 Recommend

Lily

Nags Head, NC [17 hours ago](#)

I am very impressed by Goldberg's clear, direct argument that we absolutely need to address these issues that have gotten our democracy into to such a mess. We desperately need bold leaders to guide us from the darkness, and I appreciate Goldberg putting out the alarm. Thank you NYT for adding such a talented, thoughtful writer to your already excellent opinion page.

- 78 Recommend

pak

The other side of the Columbia [19 hours ago](#)

Exactly what are those looney left policies and how exactly have they affected you? Nothing like opining broad generalities with nothing factual to support them. (And don't point to the dreamer act, as trump seems to want to keep it as long as he can blame congress for it.) p.s., if you really think that Obama campaigned as a centrist, I've got a bridge to sell you. He campaigned on hope and change, all of which was obstructed by the republicans.

- In Reply to g
- 71 Recommend

M

Brooklyn [6 hours ago](#)

I would agree with everything here except the puzzling comment that "They don't receive services from the government." They do! They receive it in spades and disproportionately at the expense of the blue-state population and business centers. How do they not understand the source of their medicaid, medicare, highways, military, land grant institutions, etc. etc.? Bewildering. If they truly had a principled stand "against charity" I might still be concerned on behalf of their doomed children and pollution not

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contained by state boundary lines, but they don't even have internal coherence on their side!

- In Reply to Jonathan
- 67 Recommend

Michael

*is a trusted commenter* North Carolina [8 hours ago](#)

What a NYT coming out column! Welcome!

I am more than a little tired of the GOP's verbal sleight of hand while they aid and abet their handlers in robbing this nation blind. As any student of history and government knows (which is part of our problem), a republic differs, in definition anyway, from pure democracy only in that it provides for elected officials responsible to and representative of the citizenry. It in no way means undemocratic. To suggest otherwise is a canard. But, as with "healthcare", tax "reform", deficit "reduction, and climate change denial, today's GOP is literally a house of lies. And it is killing this country. I wish I were as sanguine as Governor Brown, but in my view this can no longer be legitimately considered one country, and it really hasn't been in decades.

- 66 Recommend

abo

*is a trusted commenter* Paris [20 hours ago](#)

Didn't Obama win the popular vote? So what was there to complain about?

- In Reply to g
- 65 Recommend

gerry

princeton [20 hours ago](#)

The dark truth is that there is no reason that the imbalance caused by the electoral college will be corrected by the states that benefit from it. My review of the US Supreme Court cases on gerrymandering leads me to conclude that " political gerrymandering " will be found constitutional. The Only real remedy is to vote. 2018 is either the end or a new beginning,

- 64 Recommend

JT

Ridgway Co [19 hours ago](#)

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Taxation without representation may lead to revolt.

- 62 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

Charles Zigmund

Somers, NY [3 hours ago](#)

As in a Greek tragedy, America's original sin of slavery is coming back to haunt us. The Constitution was a compromise between north and south to keep the nation safe for slavery. This is the source of Madison's plan for the Senate and the Electoral College. The Senate, to award each state two votes in the legislature no matter how small its population or how many undercounted slaves it had; the Electoral College, to award each state a minimum number of votes for president for the same reason. A corrupt bargain with destiny which has come back to hobble us at a critical moment.

- 61 Recommend

J.

*is a trusted commenter* Ohio [8 hours ago](#)

My representative, Tea Party Republican Steve Chabot, would not be in office but for extreme gerrymandering. Hamilton County, largely composed of Cincinnati which went for Obama twice and Clinton last year, has been hacked into two geographically-contorted districts. Chabot's district connects metropolitan areas via narrow stretches of land to radically conservative rural, white, evangelical areas. Chabot's extreme right wing counterpart, Brad Wenstrup, has a safe seat in a neighboring district that folds the eastern half of Hamilton County into large areas of sparsely populated Appalachian Ohio. I and other metropolitan voters have been very effectively disenfranchised.

Chabot is mediocrity personified, hiding from his constituents so that he can collect a paycheck and future pension. When you call his office, his staff can not tell you his position on key topics. We deserve better. And we would have better if rankly political gerrymandering were replaced by districts drawn according to logical geographic boundaries.

- 60 Recommend

NW

Larchmont, NY [20 hours ago](#)

looney left? please. consequences? hello justice garland. Tmthe republicans are a disaster...they know they lose if the fight is fair. or if they tell the truth. ideology blinds.

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- 
- In Reply to g
  - 59 Recommend

Peter

united states [19 hours ago](#)

Thoughtful, accurate, and succinct. I look forward to reading more of your columns.

I hope that on this subject, especially, you will take a feather from the cap of your incisive and persistent colleague, Charles Blow, and use your voice in a very focused manner as you continue to speak truth to power.

Redistricting, which the Republicans shamelessly practice as they constantly redraw voting districts, should be a frequently discussed topic by journalists.

- 58 Recommend

Naomi

New England [6 hours ago](#)

You don't get to pick who moves to your region. Rural America is not as lily-white nor Christian as you think -- multiculturalism is here, like it or not. Lots of Muslim doctors practice in rural towns; many immigrants seek less expensive housing and farm/factory jobs in them.

And these rural areas imagine they "don't receive services," but they do. Their citizens rely on the federal government for highways, SSI, Medicaid, weather forecasts & satellites, FEMA, mail service, military protection & bases, VA, and much more. Those are government services too, just different ones than cities.

There's a reason why most rural states receive more tax money from the government than they send to it. If they want government to leave them alone, they should try doing without the federal benefits they think they don't receive.

- In Reply to Jonathan
- 57 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

Chris

South Florida [2 hours ago](#)

Go back through history and try and find a success story that came out of a tyranny of the minority situation. This will not end well for America, looking for Republicans to put their country above party is a fools errand.

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- 
- 51 Recommend

lvtoroam

chicago [6 hours ago](#)

Those country folk receive all kinds of government services. They have been unable to pay for their needed services for a very long time now, be it healthcare, roads or income support.

- In Reply to Jonathan
- 49 Recommend

Marc

Virginia [17 hours ago](#)

Excellent column. Although stated by others it continues to be much needed.

This goes beyond current politics, parties, or presidents. American democracy cannot and will not last if this continues or increases. In fact there are strong arguments that this dynamic of muted or blunted democracy is the major if not the largest factor behind America's current degenerating political ecosystem and civic discourse.

The beauty of democracy is that the people can tell their leaders how they wish to be governed through elected officials that ideally have gained their position and power through an electoral majority. When the will of the people can no longer be effectively transmitted to leaders who sit atop in power through a system of rigged minority political consent, then democracy fails, dissatisfaction sets in, mistrust grows, then anger, all leading finally, inevitably, and unfortunately to rebellion. Ask King George III how America turned out under his rule in during similar circumstances.

- 48 Recommend

L

Seattle [19 hours ago](#)

Yes they did. Democrats won both the popular and electoral votes with Obama.

- In Reply to g
- 48 Recommend

Josh

Oregon [11 hours ago](#)

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Some Conservatives are here extolling the virtues of our current system. "We're a Republic, not a direct Democracy! Our constitution was written that way for a reason!" Well for them, I have a modest proposal that they should be entirely fine with, since it's technically constitutional: give the city of San Francisco complete control over the Federal Government.

See, all it takes to split up a state is approval from Congress and the state Legislature. You can create states with no real lower limits regarding population size and area. That means that, if the state legislature and the U.S. Congress was okay with it, you could split up a single city into multiple states.

The next time we have Democratic control of congress, they could allow the city of San Francisco to become its own state (and thus get a minimum of two Senators and one Representative.) But it goes beyond that. They could allow the city of San Francisco to split up into five hundred different states! That which give them 1,000 Senators, 500 Representatives, and 1,500 electoral votes. That would allow a single city to have essentially total control of all three branches of government forever.

Of course, that would be impractical and untenable for a huge variety of reasons. It would be a mockery of our constitution. But it would, ultimately, be constitutional. So if that happened, if San Francisco was split into 5,000 states and took control of the government, I assume Republicans would be fine with it, right?

- 46 Recommend

Mosttoothless

Boca Raton, FL [16 hours ago](#)

Excellent article. On the face of it the chances for the more liberal majority to retake the government seem small -- especially when confronted with monied Republicans, Citizens United, lobbying by big industries, anti-immigrant populism, and the sitting lawmakers and jurist who's interest it is to maintain the current gerrymandered landscape. The one hope to pull us out of this deepening quagmire, and it is a realistic hope I think, is that the liberal majority will grow in numbers sufficiently to overcome the Republicans. The changing demographic in this country shows an increase in the urban, the suburban, the college educated, and the brown and black citizens. And hopefully the youth in our nation will maintain their liberal values when old enough to vote -- and will maintain the motivation to go to the polls. It may eventually be an overwhelming turnaround. We just have to avoid self destruction until then.

- 46 Recommend

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Jackie Geller

San Diego [19 hours ago](#)

Scary scenario. Rather than secede, California, Oregon and Washington should consider breaking into 6 states, yielding 12 senate seats and several more house seats.

- 46 Recommend

Zak

Seattle [20 hours ago](#)

I think the takeaway from our current situation should be the need for proportional representation. As long as there's only two real choices at the voting box, much of America will remain unrepresented.

- 46 Recommend

Susan H

SC [19 hours ago](#)

As a Democrat living in South Carolina, my vote was essentially meaningless. Now I live in a state (Maine) where my vote is much more likely to count. If South Carolinians want their state to still be run like the old confederacy, fine, but votes for the Presidency should count equally no matter what state they are cast in.

- 46 Recommend

Jesse Ingber

Berkeley [16 hours ago](#)

The GOP got 49.1% of the popular vote and 55.4% of the seats. That's 241 seats, whereas the proportional amount would have been 214 - a 37 person increase. If it had been proportional to voting, the Democratic party would have won 209 seats instead of 194, and the gap between the parties would have been 5 seats total instead of the current 47. It's not a majority, but the difference is massive and shouldn't be minimized.

- In Reply to Alces Hill
- 45 Recommend

yapete

Detroit [18 hours ago](#)

I always thought the republican's distinction between a "republic" and a "democracy" more than curious. The two are not exclusive of each other. A republic means simply

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rule by the public, not a monarch. How the rulers are determined, depends on the form of the republic. Ours is a "democratic republic", since we elect our rulers. So, we are both a republic and a democracy. At least supposed to be...

- 45 Recommend

dbsweden

*is a trusted commenter* Sweden [12 hours ago](#)

Brava, Ms. Goldberg. In your debut column you defined the problems of America. 850 words certainly don't allow you to explain the flaws in our constitution, but mentioning them is a start. As an American lawyer who has experience in its courts and sees the flaws, I agree with you and look forward to your future columns.

- 44 Recommend

Robert Hudson

Champaign IL [12 hours ago](#)

In addition to the other inequities discussed by Ms. Goldberg and multiple readers, the GOP seems to be playing with grossly exploiting the power they have to tax the blue states to benefit the red. This came up recently in the Graham-Cassidy version of ACA repeal where billions of Medicaid dollars would be redistributed away from states that had expanded Medicaid (especially blue states) to those that hadn't (all red states). It's also being toyed with when tax "reformers" suggest eliminating the state income tax deduction. If the GOP follow through on these, a tax revolt from the Democratic side of the political spectrum would be more than justified.

- 44 Recommend

BarbT

NJ [8 hours ago](#)

An excellent column. During the "healthcare" debate this spring and summer, I've asked myself why the blue states should stay in this union. Surely, we, the residents of these states, do NOT exist to see our tax dollars redistributed to the red states so they can have healthcare while we, the residents of the blue states, have none. The big blues should form another country, taking our GDP with us. NO TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION. Where have I heard that before?

- 43 Recommend

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PJF

Seattle [19 hours ago](#)

I think its important to also recognize that the Electoral College is a legacy of racism, which this column did not address. Congressional district representation, which is the heart of the electoral college, was expanded to count non-citizen slaves as three-fifths of a person when apportioning districts. This was a "compromise" that gave southern whites a disproportionate voice - something that remains in place today even though slavery was abolished. The electoral college was not really designed as a noble institution to enable "wise men" to override the mob. That was spin, and irrelevant. On the contrary - it was meant to appease southern slave-holders.

- 43 Recommend

Christopher

Los Angeles [15 hours ago](#)

These are perfectly valid points. Add to them the fact that 5 Supreme Court justices, who are appointed for life, have more power than the president or Congress combined. Their decisions cannot be reviewed or reversed. But just understand, as much as minority rule is anti-democratic, there is simply no practical way to change it. The Republicans benefit disproportionately from this system. So as much as we would need them to participate in Constitutional changes, they're not going to vote for something that reduces their power. Nothing will change.

- 41 Recommend

Jack T

Alabama [19 hours ago](#)

there is no nation to save. trump, his seed, the evangelical theocrats and hedge fund pirates own the nation and it is better than it be dissolved than to exist to forward their agendas. a nation that they love is a nation to be despised. theocracy and kleptocracy are terrible forms of government.

- 40 Recommend

Barbara Saunders

San Francisco [19 hours ago](#)

Funny. Leftists claim he campaigned as a leftist and betrayed them by acting as a centrist.

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- 
- In Reply to g
  - 40 Recommend

Paul

Bellerose Terrace [5 hours ago](#)

Jonathan, the description of people living in the countryside you offer is pure fiction, though it represents our rural delusion.

If those people really "don't receive government services," then what about Ike's Rural Electrification. They want to be free of government services, how about they live off the grid, like the unabomber.

And do their farms send food to market via Interstate Highways, or even US Routes, like Route 1 near you, and Route 66 out to the west? Those are government services, sir.

Are the older rurals covered by Medicare? Government service alert! Do the poorer folks get Medicaid coverage and SNAP? Government services! That flinty individualist is pure myth, driven partially by Hollywood.

- In Reply to Jonathan
- 38 Recommend

Dan Kravitz

Harpswell, ME [18 hours ago](#)

Maine and Nebraska award electoral votes by Congressional District. Maine's electoral vote was split 3 - 1 for Clinton over Trump, AFAIK the first time that a state's electoral votes were divided.

There are no constitutional barriers to any and every state choosing to use this system for the Electoral College. I haven't done an analysis of how this would have affected the Presidential vote in 2016, but combined with a possible Supreme Court ruling on the gerrymander, it could go a long way towards bringing this country closer to democracy.

Dan Kravitz

- 38 Recommend

Sterling

Brooklyn [4 hours ago](#)

How about a law that says a state cannot take more from the Federal Treasury than it puts in? My guess red states might be nicer to blue states when their gravy train of blue state subsidies is shut off. Frankly as a blue state resident, I'm sick and tired of supporting the Evangelical Welfare Empire that is the red states.

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- 37 Recommend

sfdphd

*is a trusted commenter* San Francisco [12 hours ago](#)

“Roughly half the country gets 80 percent of the votes in the Senate, and the other half of the country gets 20 percent.”

If that's true, then the Democrats better use it as a rallying cry and make sure they have a plan to do something about it!

- 37 Recommend

Ellie\_Jo

Paramus, NJ [13 hours ago](#)

I agree completely. Thank you for keeping this topic alive in people's minds. It is urgent, and deserves far more attention than it gets.

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact would certainly be a step in the right direction, however, the states which benefit from the inequities of the Electoral College have no motivation to sign on for this change. Elimination of the Electoral College completely would be ideal, but this is also unlikely to happen.

It would help if the Supreme Court would rule against the hyper-partisan gerrymandering.

Welcome aboard, Ms. Goldberg! I look forward to reading your columns.

- 37 Recommend

c

ny [19 hours ago](#)

let's see - if Hillary were POTUS today, we would not be taunting North Korea. If she were President today, we would not be trying (and failing again) to dismantle the ACA.

If she were President today, we would never have witnessed the Charlottesville disgrace, and tragic death of an american in her own town.

If she were President today, neither the NFL players and owners, nor any other sports figure would be engaged in a war of words with our CIC.

If she were President today, ... if only she WERE President today! we'd be so much better off.

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- 
- In Reply to Bruce Jia
  - 37 Recommend

Jose Pardinias

Collegeville, PA [19 hours ago](#)

History 101: Minorities ALWAYS rule.

In the USA it is the plutocrats (foreign and domestic) through their servants in government and the media.

- 37 Recommend

SandraH.

California [19 hours ago](#)

Excellent column. Thanks for raising the most important political question of our time-- how to achieve the goal of equal representation for all.

The right likes to make a distinction between a republic and a democracy, but the truth is that they are the same thing. A republic is a representative democracy without a monarch. In 1805 Thomas Jefferson referred to the U.S. as a representative democracy, which is clearly what the framers intended.

We need to end political gerrymandering, increase the number of representatives in the House to represent more accurately the populations of big states, and end the Electoral College. The Senate is profoundly undemocratic--why should less than half the population control 80 percent of Senate seats?

At risk is the very legitimacy of our democracy. We can't continue to have elections where the majority is underrepresented. We're at an inflection point.

- 37 Recommend

David Patin

Bloomington, IN [9 hours ago](#)

Rather than "replacing single-member districts with larger districts represented by several people" why not just allow the House to increase with population, as the constitution had originally intended.

Since the census of 1920 the House has not increased in size yet the US has tripled in population.

As originally written Madison had both the House and the Senate increasing with

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population. Anti-Federalists, today's Republicans, refused to agree and in what was called "the Grand Compromise" the Senate was to have a fixed number but the House to be proportional. Then in the 20's Republicans, in charge of both houses of congress and the White House made reversed the clear wording of the constitution and set the House at 435.

Reversing that law should be at least as important as ending gerrymandering.

- 35 Recommend

snarkqueen

chicago [9 hours ago](#)

The easiest way to change the current problems are twofold. One. End the politicization of the electoral college. Make them independent again, so they can do what the constitution requires. Two. Require all congressional districts to be drawn by computer and de-politicize that as well. Both are constitutional and both can be easily taken from state control.

- 33 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

TT

Wolcott, CT [3 hours ago](#)

Brava Michelle Goldberg! We, as a nation, certainly do need to start engaging in a political science debate. I know it will never happen, but I for one would like to see this nation switch to Parliamentary government.

- 32 Recommend

Brian

Ohio [9 hours ago](#)

Yes, welcome!

There are so many interesting systems out there that tinker with the elements of democracy, and while I don't know if they would have much of a chance right now in the U.S., they are important to know about, but there are so many barriers to knowing these days despite the openness of information. A few that I can think of are:

1) The lack of these perspectives in K-12 education. Maybe I'm out of touch here, but I doubt that today's schools, for example, teach that parliamentary democracies have generally been better at balancing power and avoiding authoritarian rule than

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presidential systems, which leads to the 2nd point

2) Unreflective patriotism. Yes, the U.S. has a great history and system. But cheerleading for the system gets in the ways of broader ideas about how things can be organized

3) Money. So much money in politics today. Hard to see how more modest systems or reforms could get going without some efforts to reduce unlimited corporate and wealthy individual spending for political purposes.

In the end, even a relatively small change like those Recommended here for a more proportional system are actually big constitutional issues. I feel sympathetic to the idea that we might need at some point to have a new constitutional convention, but I'm simultaneously afraid of what might emerge given the inequality in our nation and the lack of any restraint on that money to serve its own political ends.

- 32 Recommend

robert

new york [18 hours ago](#)

Another Electoral College rule that distorts election results is that the winner of a simple majority of a state's popular vote wins all delegates in that state. So the result is the same whether a candidate wins 51% or 99% of a state's popular vote. The outcome would be quite different if delegates were allocated between candidates based on their relative percentages of the state's popular vote, which would be the more "democratic" approach. The existing rule benefited Trump (and would tend to benefit any Republican candidate) because of the lopsided Democrat voter majorities in a number of high-delegate states including California, New York, and Illinois (Clinton won by a huge margin of 17% to 30% in these states). In contrast, Trump took all the delegates in many states where he won by only a small margin.

- 31 Recommend

Someone

Elsewhere [19 hours ago](#)

Great to see the New York Times' commitment to diversity in action with the addition of yet another columnist committed to ramming pro-Clinton, Establishment, conventional groupthink down the throats of an increasingly unruly, resistant and non-compliant population.

Somebody should point out to the newbie that her comments on gerrymandering notwithstanding, the whole point of the rules underpinning 70 years of peace, stability and prosperity is that they are proven, true and just, and only spoiled children insist on replacing rules that deny them what they want when they want it, simply because they're too spoiled and stupid to understand the wisdom earned by discipline.

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Just as real tolerance requires real discomfort, real wisdom requires a willingness to accept and understand opposing views - or at least sufficient mental fortitude to contemplate an alternative perspective.

The alternative is what we've got: failure. That failure has nothing to do with Trump and everything to do with a tiny fringe minority that keeps on shouting out a bullhorn while everybody else rolls their eyes and keeps their hands slapped over their ears.

- 31 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

Scott

Kirkland [3 hours ago](#)

It is really simple. The Constitution needs to be amended. You know what you need to do, now begin the process.

- In Reply to Frank Malloy
- 30 Recommend

Jonathan

Brookline MA [20 hours ago](#)

The political divide between town and country snowballs because of demographic shifts. Those who want to live in urban areas move to the city, increasingly abandoning the countryside to those who want government to leave them alone, not take their tax money, and who view personal protection as a matter of carrying a gun. They don't receive services from the government, why should they want to pay taxes? And they are not interested in foreigners either. If they liked multi-culturalism, they would have moved to cities long ago.

- 29 Recommend

Neal

Los Angeles [16 hours ago](#)

Congrats on a great first column. I agree that the possibility of enacting the alternative voting systems is unlikely. The million dollar question then is how to move the needle despite minority rule and unlikely voting changes. Looking forward to your thoughts on these and other topics in the future.

- 28 Recommend

Mike

ATL [19 hours ago](#)

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I think what's more concerning is our media's constant pathetic whining about the results of a democratic election (electoral college or not.) Of course a single vote in a lower pop state is going to be given a greater value than one in a higher pop state. This shouldn't be news for anyone. If you want to write a piece poking holes in the logic behind the electoral college, there are many great ways of doing it. But I assure you, crying out "because, er, like, Donald Drumph!" isn't one of them.

Try harder next week Michelle.

- 28 Recommend

RjW

Chicago [10 hours ago](#)

An eloquent plea for an end to gerrymandering and excellent first time column. With gps mapping programs it is now easy to draw fair congressional districts. Getting this implemented is quite another story, never the less, it's what needs to happen.

- 27 Recommend

Ann

*is a trusted commenter* California [11 hours ago](#)

Good points. But doesn't healthy democratic participation require a fair, secure, and transparent voting process and system that ensures all eligible voters can cast their votes and have their votes counted accurately as cast? Unfortunately, too much that's come to light about the 2016 election results prove our system can be gamed, hacked, and manipulated.

1) "The Insecurity Of America's Old and Underfunded Voting Systems"

[www.npr.org/programs/fresh-air/2017/07/20/538312289/fresh-air-for-july-2...](http://www.npr.org/programs/fresh-air/2017/07/20/538312289/fresh-air-for-july-2...)

2) "Hackers Take Control of U.S. Voting Machines in Less than 90 Minutes"

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/07/31/hackers-take-control-us...>

3) "Exposure revealed in Georgia's special election"

<http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/14/will-the-georgia-speci...>

4) "Data breach leaks millions of voters records"

<https://www.yahoo.com/finance/news/gop-hired-data-company-leaked-1451008...>

- In Reply to CreatingValue
- 27 Recommend

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Eitan

Israel [15 hours ago](#)

Welcome to the Times. Good luck.

ALL Democratic systems contain flaws from the strictly democratic view of majority rule, often to promote stability or a certain ethnic/cultural bias. The question is, not, are they really completely democratic (that too is a matter of definition), but, do they provide good government? Do they provide for security, personal liberty and prosperity?

As explained in the Federalist papers, the designers of the US Constitution favored extended republic in order to prevent a tyranny of the majority, actually to defend the minority groups in society. Perhaps in 2016 it was not the coastal, cultural urban elite that really felt threatened.

Before suggesting broad changes to the Constitution and complex system that by and large has served well for 230 years, recognize that:

The main reason an abhorrent individual like Trump was elected is because he recognized what was needed to win, and was able to motivate a pretty large base to get out and vote. The standard bearing Democrats and Republicans couldn't beat him. Before judging and condemning the system, perhaps they need to reflect on themselves. Perhaps the flaw is in them.

Get out there with messages that people can relate to, and govern better between elections, and good leadership will return.

- 27 Recommend

Corinne Standish

Hopkins, MN [15 hours ago](#)

Excellent piece. Please continue along these lines.

Also please delve into what 45s Voter Integrity Commission is doing. Voter disenfranchisement and what is anyone doing about it. Paper ballots as a backup. Chances of abolishing the electoral college,

- 27 Recommend

HC

Columbia, MD [17 hours ago](#)

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The column points out that the number of votes that a state gets in the Electoral College depends upon the size of its congressional delegation. That means that every state gets two votes just for having two senators. So the Electoral College is even more undemocratic than most people realize.

- 27 Recommend

Peter Lewis

Avon,CT [19 hours ago](#)

If you google "democrat electoral college advantage" you will see dozens of articles from the Washington Post, The Hill, Time, LA Times and many other large media outlets describing the Democrats built in Electoral College advantage for 2016. In this scenario, the Democrats start out with such a large number of blue state Electoral votes that it would be impossible for Donald Trump to win. Up until midnight November 8, this was nearly universally accepted political analysis.

Because the election didn't turn out the way Michelle Goldberg hoped, she is now pulling a Hillary Clinton blame fest. Blame the Electoral College, blame gerrymandering, blame the deplorables. If you want to place blame, blame Hillary Clinton for running an uninspired campaign while outspending Trump 2 to 1. Blame Barack Obama for losing over 1000 Democratic state assembly, Governor and congressional seats. And not even caring about it. The Electoral College worked exactly as it was meant to. Next time, don't nominate a candidate whose rationale for running was "it's my turn".

- 27 Recommend

*NYT Pick*

bl

rochester [3 hours ago](#)

That threat to legitimacy is already present and there is little reason to behave as if it is only possible. Turnout in elections is very low, that for congress lower than in presidential elections. How can one possibly affirm that when only 60% of eligible voters voted in 2016 that this does not already reveal a crisis of legitimacy?

This is a subject that merits close attention by journalists, as close as the machinations that Kobach's commission attracts, or the various ALEC inspired voter ID manipulations.

My own intuition is that the 40% or so of non participants are telling us the very unpleasant to hear belief that

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the current political system is a purely formal vehicle by which private interests insure they get what they need from the hapless permanent money raisers that legislators have morphed into. The political system, to a very large extent, represents only such private interests and therefore has no importance or legitimacy to such non voters.

This is as deep a source of the crisis as those described in the op-ed piece. It is time journalists paid attention to it.

- 26 Recommend

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