

Biden\222s Big Opportunity to Save Democracy  
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Democracy is not working well at this moment in history. A number of things that the Founders hoped for have been under attack for several decades now, with the final demolition of Trump\222s wrecking ball.

Voting Rights. Our country began with limited democracy (voting permitted only to white male property owners, along with a few free Black men), yet the Founders expected enlargement and change to come in the future. Voting was indeed enlarged over the next two centuries, through amending the Constitution. The 14th Amendment mandates that "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." In practice, those "persons" were only male and the emancipated black ones were dealt with in the South with violent, intimidating voter suppression.

Women were finally included as "persons" in 1918, but in the South, this only applied to White women. Until President Johnson\222s Voting Act, Black women, along with Black men in the south, were finally enfranchised and protected by the government/

Voter Suppression. Biden must eliminate the voter suppression practices of the Republican Party, which, for several decades realized that if they depended on numbers of voters alone, they would never win another election again, unless Democrats were lazy about voting. Republicans made use of cheating: gerrymandering voting districts in states to provide more seats to Republicans in state legislatures.

The next ploy was to pack the judiciary, ignoring the lists of suitable candidates provided by the law associations, and selecting instead party hacks with ultra-conservative values. Senate leader Mitch McConnell made this process his life\222s work, corrupting courts at all levels right up to the Supreme Court itself. That Court weakened the Voting Rights Act which provided oversight of offending Southern voter suppression, claiming that prejudice no longer existed. The Court then declared that corporations had the same free speech rights (dark money) as individuals to support candidates.

A third element of voter suppression is the Electoral College, an unavoidable compromise at the country\222s founding if we were to be one, not two, countries. The Electoral College gave undemocratic power to less populated slave-owning states. Arron Burr also wanted to protect the country from "unwise" popular votes by having "cooler heads" intervene in the elections.

Biden\222s Challenges. If we are to ever be the genuine participatory democracy that we aspire to be, we will have to undo the damage of the Electoral College system, a process already begun by a growing number of states agreeing that the Electoral College of each state will cast its votes for the winner of the country\222s popular vote.

The justice system must also be dealt with to undo damage it has suffered. The most probable fixes would be term limits, getting around the Constitutional life terms by granting Supreme Court judges life terms in lower courts after they are timed out on the Supreme Court. Congress could also approve a law that gives each president one Supreme Court nomination for each presidential term.

The skewed state legislatures that benefitted from gerrymandering could be fixed by a national law that redistricting, mandated by our census counts, would be done by nonpartisan commissions, not political hacks.

A Democratic Congress, Senate, and president, could also add two states to the union, whose people have been denied franchise: the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. They deserve democracy too.

The Senate\222s Filibuster, an undemocratic abuse of power, should also be eliminated. But there is one more big issue to be addressed: guaranteeing the decency and qualifications for all candidates for office, from Congress to President. Each state has political parties that send candidates to state nominating conferences. They should be charged with selecting candidates to run for office, using known and accepted criteria. The party professionals know who are the rising stars in their parties, having watch them in City Councils, as Mayors, and Governors, people who have demonstrated leadership. Donald Trump would never have survived such a process!

And finally, Election Day should be a national holiday. Democracy needs decent voters, voters with American values. That\222s patriotism.

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