

Last week, we reviewed America\222s dismal performance on the world list of democracies. We do not have a national process for elections, leaving that to the states. Pluralism is certainly missing in our elections now, with one political party in meltdown (Republicans).

Civil liberties are under attack in a number of states. When Florida can punish a private company (Disney) for not supporting Florida\222s attack on women, gays, and transgender children, civil liberties are in trouble. More violation of civil liberties is apparent in the more backward states\222 attack on a half-century of women\222s rights, the right to abortion and their own bodies. If the national right of women to privacy (contraception and abortion) is overturned by a religiously-stacked Supreme Court, we have lost a precious right: freedom from state-supported religion.

Functioning of government is still going fairly well in city governments, but the stealth of power by Republican-majority states is a threat to the proper functioning of government. Gerrymandering has poisoned state governments, leaving them with only one party with power.

Political participation, an essential element of democratic government, is not mandated in the US. Many democracies hold elections on Sundays and mandate total participation. We increasingly make voting, which is voluntary, difficult for minority voters: a Republican process.

And our political culture is weak. When half the population is indifferent to voting, politics, and being informed, there is not much political culture to admire.

As a result of our lackluster performance in the very basic elements of democracy, we have fallen (in 2022) from a full democracy to a flawed democracy. We still have free and fair elections and basic civil liberties, but are facing the loss of many independent newspapers and journals, and one major TV station, Fox News, has abandoned most efforts at providing factual news.

Our worst failing (not considered in this standard) is the character of our authorities: presidents, representatives, governors, among whom there are many who disdain norms of truth telling and practice abuse of office (personally abusing women and publicly abusing fiscal honesty).

I believe that our rating as a flawed democracy is not new. It is built into our very structure. To protect minority opinions, our founders created a Senate that can thwart popular votes in Congress. To protect the independence of the judiciary, they gave lifelong terms of office to federal judges and those of the Supreme Court, which today can give bad people unlimited power. The only remedy to checking the evil of such individuals is impeachment, which requires the honesty of Senators and Representatives (and presidents).

How do we fix this? Our democracy has faced emergencies in the past that endangered its survival: the 1840s, leading to the Civil War, the Depression era of the 1930s, in which Communists and Fascists vied for power. A great president rose to the occasion and saved us with numerous reforms that made us a better country.

The way to fix this right now is to have an overwhelming majority of Democrats elected (despite obstruction) in the upcoming election. The rights of women being threatened can spur election participation only seen in the Trump 2018 election, when a number of good Democrats filled the House and Senate. If the 2022 election turns out to be such a sweep, President Biden will finally have the power to get needed reforms enacted.

Essential Reforms:

A national system of conducting elections, term limits for all judges (perhaps 20 years), three four-year terms for Representatives (relieving them of constant money raising) and term limits for them and three six-year terms for Senators.

Needed now:

Eliminate Electoral College as obsolete and undemocratic. This was the founders\222 compromise for smaller states. Eliminate gerrymandering in states by having nonpartisan drawing up of electoral districts. Most controversial is eliminating primary elections and supporting each state\222s political parties to select candidates.

They know the character of their nominees. Get rid of referendums. State representatives should be legislating, not big money.

Supreme Court Changes:

Change term limits to 20 years, and have each president nominate one Justice per term. No president could nominate more than two.

We can do this!

688 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of "How Do You Know That? Contact her at Lfarhat102@gmail.com or www.globalthink.net