

If one were to ask dozens of people on the street what is wrong with our country today, they would probably say the lies that have divided us into factions, or the tremendous gap in earnings between the corporate heads and the rest, or the corruption in the legal community (the Supreme Court the most) that suggests our justice system is crumbling

A new book, just released, has made me see a bigger picture about what is wrong with us and how it can be fixed. In the book: Tyranny of the Minority: Why American Democracy Reached the Breaking Point, the authors compare our democracy with those of comparable allies. Most democracies, many in response to the destructions of World War II, have made changes and modernized their constitutions to enlarge majority rule.

We have not touched this issue for the past 50 years, leaving us with such institutions as the Electoral College (an idea of our founding fathers who wanted to put constraints on popular voting), which permits a few states with smaller and rural populations to veto the votes of states with large urban populations.

We also have, blame the the founders, a Senate in addition to the popular vote House of Representatives, in which every state, no matter population size, has two senators with enormous power.

The Electoral College was able to override the popular votes in the 2016 Clinton v Trump election. Clinton won by two million more popular votes than Trump, yet the minority states that dominated the election put Trump in the presidency.

The Founders also gave considerable power to the states, which originally gave state governors power to appoint Senators. This undemocratic process was soon replaced by direct popular election of senators in each state. But constraints on electoral abuses in the states themselves have taken much longer to fix. Many of our states abuse popular voting by disenfranchising majorities (formerly slaves) and Black populations, emancipated by the government, but intimidated by southern state laws if they tried to vote.

The issue of emancipating White women to become voters had to wait 130 years, but Black women in the South were still unable to vote. Around the world now, all democracies claim to have popular elections, yet we still do not.

Another undemocratic practice is drawing up voting districts in each state after every ten years census. Only a few progressive states have professional demographers draw up the maps; in the rest, the two political parties battle this out. In the past, each winning party gerrymandered the voting districts to their own advantage. Today, the problem is that as the country urbanizes, the Republican Party loses numbers. As of 2022, 31 states permitted voters to indicate party preference. Democrats were 55% of voters, Republicans 40%. In California, the Democratic voters are twice that of Republicans.

We are now in an era in which the Republican Party is in meltdown, just as the Whig Party was in the 1850s. The Whigs were divided over slavery, some supporting and others opposing. Their divisions created room for a new party, the clearly anti-slavery party, Republicans, headed by President Abraham Lincoln.

Today's Republican Party is no longer Lincoln's party. They fight every new condition that modernization has brought: social and political equality, women's bodily autonomy, universal medical care (a given in all other democracies), and modernization of our justice system.

Now traditional Republicans are leaving their party and the extremists are taking over. Led by a former president who would not have won (Trump) if there had been no electoral college, and a Supreme Court with ethics problems, justices no with extremist majority. These justices were appointed by President Trump, who would not have been president if majorities prevailed. Corruption sweeps this court and Trump-supporting Congressional Republicans. Our most trusted institutions are now under a shadow of doubt, including free and fair elections.

There are measures we can take if we want to save our democracy. At the moment, all

of our democratic institutions are under attack by Republicans and the American voters are divided into thoughtful and gullible. We can fix this.

686 words

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