

2/28/26

The Case for Reformation

Thank you all for coming here today. Most of you are here because you know me personally, or because you know my wife, Nichole, personally. I am humbled and deeply grateful for your support. However, as an independent campaign with a small fraction of the budget of the incumbent, I am here to ask even more of the individuals in this room. I need you to believe in both the *possibility* and *necessity* of reforming America's two-party system, and I need you to share this message with the people you know. Our only hope for electoral success rests in the power of viral persuasion, starting with all of us here today.

My goal is to convince you that this message—while revolutionary—is neither contentious nor partisan. You can talk about it around the dinner table, at the water cooler, and in church hallways without hurting red or blue feelings. My message is *not* that the people in power are evil, but that the *system* in which they reside provides them bad incentives. It is simply an engineering problem, and we can fix it.

The solution, in fact, can be found in the writings of this country's Founders. In his farewell address, George Washington warned about the danger of two great factions, each trying to govern the country by a slim majority:

“The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge ... is itself a frightful despotism.”

These prophetic words describe our current political environment perfectly: alternating domination of the Republican and Democratic parties, sharpened by the spirit of revenge. He goes on to explain that such a system inevitably leads to authoritarianism.

“But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.”

James Madison and Alexander Hamilton explain throughout the Federalist Papers that the key to resisting this slide towards autocracy rests in distributing power among diverse factions:

“In a free government the security for civil rights must be the same as that for religious rights. It consists in the one case in the multiplicity of interests, and in the other in the multiplicity of sects.”

The simple truth is that our present day-democracy is falling catastrophically short of the Founders' vision. We know the sort of republic they envisioned, and we deviate from it at our peril. For Constitutional checks and balances to function as Madison intended, we must have more than two political parties to choose from.

For many of us, it is nearly impossible to imagine a version of political America that contains more than just Republicans and Democrats. However, there is nothing inevitable or natural about two mega-parties: they are simply the product of our election system. A single Congressional law that makes two key changes to our electoral process: first, proportional representation in the general election, and second, multi-member Congressional districts, will lay the foundation for real multi-party democracy in this country. I know these sound like complicated political concepts, but bear with me for a minute: they're both straightforward and sensible. Furthermore, the Constitution explicitly grants Congress the power to regulate the election of House and Senate representatives, making this reform completely in-bounds of what's Constitutionally permitted. So, let's take a minute to imagine this possible future.

The year is 2028, and the Fair Representation Act has been successfully passed. Although the election remains broadly the same, your ballot looks different: instead of bubbling in a single candidate for each office, you rank your preferred candidates first, second, third, and fourth. This asks a lot more of Americans: instead of simply voting against a party you can't stand, it invites you to listen to multiple viewpoints on a range of issues and weigh your relative support for each perspective.

Thankfully, this means that the 2028 campaigns were run very differently. Nasty attacks against a single candidate nearly vanished, because pushing a single opponent down wasn't a winning strategy: instead, campaigns relied on their base to rank them in first place, and then they focused on persuading members of other parties to rank them second or third. Mercifully, the news reflected this change, morphing from a pure outrage machine towards providing substantive discussion of ideas. With the new ballot, for the first time you've felt interested in talking to your coworkers and family about politics, asking their thoughts on the order in which to rank the options. This ranked choice format is an example of *representative voting*.

When the votes are tabulated, the combined rankings of voters across the entire state are used to determine Utah's four House representatives. This means the threshold for representation in Congress is no longer a plurality inside a district's arbitrary boundaries, but instead 20% of the voters across the entire state. In our hypothetical 2028 election, this means that the Balance the Budget party and the Pathway to Citizenship party and the Fix Lobbying party were all able to run, without risking the spoiler effect of splitting votes and with a real chance at winning representation. Gerrymandering is no longer possible. Local issues now share the stage with national party identities. This is *multi-member districting*.

In Washington, fracturing the two parties into several policy-centric factions paves the way for massive improvement to Congressional legislating. The out-party is no longer obstructing every bill crafted by the in-party, and the in-party is no longer trying to ram legislation through by itself. The out-party is no longer *cheering for the failure* of the in-party. Instead, each party sees itself as an important minority in a broader tapestry. This turns down the temperature of the election rhetoric: the parties' *entire vision for the soul of America* no longer turns on winning that last Senate seat. Instead, each party can focus on finding winning coalitions to accomplish the goals their

constituents mandated. Multiple parties can benefit at the same time, when they work together on effective policy. Congress is no longer fictitiously held to a permanent fifty-fifty split: they can agree on certain issues sixty-forty or eighty-twenty. If representatives feel strongly that their party has gone hopelessly astray, they now have the option of saying so and still keeping their job by landing in a different party. This improves everyone's credibility, and it finally allows the legislature to pull power from the Executive branch back within Constitutional limits.

There are many more things that could be said, but I hope you can start to picture the ways multi-party democracy would alleviate the toxic, zero-sum politics we're suffering through now. With power fractured among diverse interests in the way that the Founders intended, the good, patriotic Americans in office would be better enabled to uphold the Constitution and listen to the voice of their constituents. This is a future we can have.

If you've felt cynical about politics, because nothing gets fixed, you're not wrong. If you've felt disinterested in voting, because the general election doesn't reflect your voice, you're not wrong. And if you've felt anxious talking with your friends and family about politics, because the bickering about who's right and who's wrong is exhausting, you're absolutely right. Every one of these problems is a symptom of the sickness of monopoly. Many local races are run completely unopposed. In 90% of all Congressional districts—whether red or blue—there is a local supermajority party. Let me repeat that: in 390 out of the 435 Congressional districts, today—without even knowing the name of the eventual candidate—we already know the party affiliation of the November winner. For 140 out of 160 million eligible voters, their votes are electorally *meaningless*.

Corruption festers without competition, and policy stagnates without creativity. Politics desperately requires a healthy marketplace to force it to listen to constituents, pay attention to local issues, and campaign on persuasion instead of outrage.

The single overriding reason that common sense reform hasn't happened yet is because party leadership and wealthy donors benefit so much from helming the country half the time. While the powerful are always reluctant to step away from their power, we the people have never been more ready for an improvement to our system. Congressional productivity is at an all-time low. Voter confidence in the institutions of our Democracy is at an all-time low. Voter satisfaction with the two parties is at an all-time low. This is why reform, as challenging as it is, is both *essential* and *possible*.

I humbly urge that each of you sign your name to this petition for me to appear on the ballot. If you haven't put your email on the mailing list on my website, feel free to add it to this list to learn more about how we can fix our broken system, and how you can participate in that work. I ask you to believe that change is possible. I ask you to have the courage to cast a ballot that is neither Democratic nor Republican, and I ask you to have the courage to tell your friends and family that you're doing so. Thank you.

Madison explained that the checks and balances built into the Constitution are meaningless when Congress fails to reign in the Executive branch, and when the States fail to withhold power from Washington. This short-circuiting of accountability has occurred for every president from both parties in the last generation, and the vicious cycle shows no signs of slowing down.

Public problem-solving has been paralyzed by toxic partisanship. Each party must despise every idea from the other side, so that the thought of them winning horrifies us and energizes us to vote. *This is a fiction.* Neither party has a monopoly on truth, but the two-party system incentivizes them to act that way. It means that the parties demand that their members *obstruct* instead of *compromise*. It means they prioritize *ideology over evidence*. It means they would rather *win* than *play by the rules*.

Neither Republicans nor Democrats have a monopoly on the truth. In *Abundance*, Ezra Klein describes how excessive housing regulation drives up home prices and causes homelessness in blue states. In *The Privatization of Everything*, Allen Mikaelian describes the disaster of outsourcing municipal water to the private sector in red states. In *Evicted*, Matthew Desmond describes the market failures and inflationary pressure of badly implemented housing vouchers. In *Winners Take All*, Anand Giridharadas describes the runaway influence of corporate power in Washington.

As James Madison explains, we the people benefit when the faction in power has to compromise with different perspectives to pass their preferred policy. Our current system where the parties take it in turns to swing the wheel wildly left or right is a disaster for good policy. We want government where new ideas can succeed on their merit, instead of their connections to existing power; we want government where we know we won't always agree, but where we can disagree *productively*.

Let's imagine America with five relevant political parties, instead of two. In this case, the President is a member of one of those parties and must collaborate with the other four, building coalitions and considering several perspectives, instead of dictating policy objectives for half of the country. Congress is now composed of five factions, and power is shared according to their representation. Instead of the in-party working to silence their opponents and the out-party obstructing every legislative objective, each party recognizes that it is an important minority in a broader tapestry. Instead of constant bickering for a slim majority—sacrificing American interests to the need to *win* no matter the cost, whether it's whims of the wealthiest campaign contributors or purchasing votes with constant tax breaks and entitlements—parties can pursue tough and effective legislation to fix America's most pressing problems. Instead of lambasting every policy originating in the opposition party, these factions are free to find common ground and champion multi-lateral legislation, working together to craft the best policy possible. Furthermore, representatives have the liberty to criticize or congratulate the President on an issue-by-issue basis, without fearing reprisals for betraying the party that put them in power. Credibility improves when the fiction of a permanent fifty-fifty split can become sixty-forty or eighty-twenty.

————— In this future, voters feel that government has never been more responsive to their votes. Imagine the new ballot, where instead of filling in a single bubble for your candidate, you rank the options one through five. This system invites you to carefully study the issues and listen to multiple perspectives to make this choice. As it exists today, if you already know you're going to vote Republican or already know you're going to vote Democrat, what's the point to learning anything else about the issues, other than the entertainment value of seeing how evil the other side is? If you're the supermajority party facing no competition, why would you bother informing your constituents? If you can't imagine being a member of the other party, how can you see them as anything but evil or horribly misinformed? By contrast, in the new system, we are each encouraged to think about what's best for America, instead of just rooting for our team. In the new system, parties run a real risk of losing representation if they nominate militant partisans who scorn everyone else. Instead, primaries focus on finding candidates with broad appeal and the ability to persuade and compromise, and those candidates campaign less on negativity and more on coalition-building. In the new system, when the Balance the Budget party or the Pathway to Citizenship party or the Fix Campaign Finance party wins representation in the election, the mandate to politicians is crystal clear. In the new system, regional parties that center on local issues—like administering water rights responsibly, streamlining housing regulations to decrease home prices, or decreasing wildfire and inversion risks—are considered on a national stage and tend to pull power away from Washington and back to the States.

Utah has embraced this system for its state races as well, leading to an interesting 3-way race for governor. Before, people would have been concerned about splitting the vote between the moderate and the conservative, but in the new system, there is no risk: Everyone ranks the candidates one through three according to their real preferences.