

The “Major” Parties Are Now Minor

By Roy Minet (Rev. 10/27/14)

Support for the two “major” political parties has crumbled dramatically in recent years. Gallup’s latest voter affiliation polls show those supporting the Democrats down to only 29.5% and Republicans 24.4%. Voters affiliated with other parties or independent have grown to a whopping 44.7% plurality. It seems inevitable that, very soon, a majority will reject both Ds and Rs.

This is not surprising. Many polls have revealed the growing dissatisfaction. Both parties’ lengthy platforms read like a bunch of campaign speeches and sound bites stitched together. They neither state nor adhere to any discernable principles. Despite whatever differences they may cite during campaigns, it’s apparent that Rs and Ds do the same destructive things after they are elected: they continue to tax, spend and borrow ever more; incompetence, mismanagement and corruption flourish; disastrous foreign policy digs us into a deeper morass at a cost of many lives and trillions of dollars; rights are trampled by domestic spying, the IRS and militarized police; the “can” gets kicked down the road again and again.

The big question is: How long will the growing 45% tolerate a steady diet of Rs and Ds being rammed down their throats?

The two old parties have conspired to perpetuate their tag-team power-sharing hegemony. They have misused their power to rig the system to suppress their competition. Competition is always good. It drives improvement. The lack of true competition is a main reason why we are stuck with so many crappy politicians. Here are a few things all citizens, especially the 45%, should demand be changed.

In 1992, H. Ross Perot threw a bad scare into the old parties. He ran for president as an independent, embarrassed the others in the presidential debates and demonstrated that, even back in 1992, at least 20 million voters were indeed hungry for a fresh alternative. Thereafter, the so-called “Commission” on Presidential Debates, formed by and exclusively controlled by Ds and Rs, has blatantly excluded any and all competition from the televised debates.

Voters certainly need to hear from all candidates who will appear on enough state ballots to theoretically be able to gain a majority of electoral votes. Don’t 45% of voters deserve to hear at the very least *one* additional candidate that *they* might be interested in supporting? Control of the debates could be returned to the League of Women Voters, which bowed out years ago accusing the CPD of fraud.

It’s an awful idea to confiscate taxpayers’ money and hand millions of dollars of it over to *any* private political club. Yet, year after year, taxpayers subsidize the Rs’ and Ds’ lavish nominating

conventions. Taxpayers also foot the entire bill for the old parties' primary elections. As private organizations, each political party must bear all of its own expenses.

In several states, and Pennsylvania tops the list, the old parties have made it far more difficult for competing candidates to get their names on the ballot. In recent years, PA statewide candidates have had to obtain as many as 67,070 nominating petition signatures (compared to 2,000 for Ds and Rs). In 2012, the Libertarian candidates were dragged through an arduous and expensive 9-week court challenge of their signatures by a team of Republican lawyers. The Libertarians prevailed that time, but more often, candidates are extorted to withdraw with the threat of huge legal costs.

Senator Mike Folmer (R) Lebanon has introduced Pennsylvania Senate bill SB195, The Voters' Choice Act, that would level the ballot access playing field. Senator Lloyd Smucker, (R) West Lampeter Twp., State Government Committee Chair, refuses to even allow a public hearing on the bill. If the PA Senate were controlled by Democrats, you can bet that their committee chair would also bury this bill.

These and many other artificial obstacles should never have existed. Now that the old parties are atrophying into minor parties, perhaps the growing new majority will be able to restore free and equal elections.