

The Passy Press

Letter to the Editor

From: James McLane jmclane@profexa.com
To: Nick Gardiner enpg@thepassypress.com
Date: February 6, 2016 08:30 EST
Subject: Novitski Essay December 2015

Dear Sir

I think Joe Novitski, whom I admire enormously, has raised some very valid and thoughtful points both in the area of money in politics and the need for national service in which all young people have to participate. However, I do not think the 2 issues are linked, as I do not think the experience gained in a National Service Program (NSP), and the resulting maturation process, will have much, if any, effect on people or groups buying elections, or at least trying to. Therefore I would separate the two issues.

As far as a coalescing American oligarchy, and I am not sure that is correct either as this oligarchy, at least in 2016, is supporting at least 5 different candidates (Cruz, Rubio, Bush, Kasich and Clinton), and the huge role money is playing in buying electoral offices, the only solution has to be legislative or court mandated. Some highly respected institution needs to do the appropriate analysis of this issue, on the basis of facts and not press stories, and put forward an appropriate legislative proposal, around which they also would enter the court system for a judgment.

My thoughts on the proposal would be that there is a maximum limit that any party (Democrat, Republican, Independent, Libertarian, and Socialist) could spend on an election. I believe I read somewhere that the recent UK election for controlling party, and, therefore, Prime Minister, cost about \$50mm pounds in total. The U.S. is much larger than the UK so maybe the limit is \$200mm or \$500mm. I don't know, but an appropriate limit is set. There also would be different limits set for local elections like mayor or state treasurer; different ones for Congressional Reps; another for Governor races; another for Senatorial races; and one for Presidential elections...

The Presidential election was the one I was referring to with the \$500mm. It may be unconstitutional for the Federal government to mandate spending limits on local and statewide elections, but I am sure clever legal minds can work their way around this. Where there is a will, there is a way.

As for Joe Novitski's other idea of Interns for Democracy (IFD), he is right on target. We need a national program that mandates all Americans immediately after graduation from high school, or between the ages of 17 and 20, must serve at least 2 years in the NSP or as an IFD. It can be military or civilian service, as Joe suggests. The civilian service would be involved in making our infrastructure better, cyber technology, our public education system, our national parks. We could create a national conservation corps like the existing Montana Conservation Corps, which my nephew runs. These interns could become companions for veterans with PTSD or alone and depressed. They could work in food kitchens. The ideas for the use of IFD's are limitless. The point is that this energetic age group can make a huge difference and can grow up a lot during the process. For example, think of all the urban public school systems that have had to cut back or eliminate music, art, phys-ed, etc. from their curriculum because of budget cuts.

These interns could provide music and art lessons, physical ed classes, help coach teams, work in the food area of schools, and so many other areas. The creativity of this age group is limitless. The interns would be paid the same amount as those entering the military and would have similar opportunities for advancement in grade and pay. Those that wanted could remain in the NSP for 5 years. If it is longer than that you have to worry about establishing some type of pension system, most of which already are under water. The funds to support the interns pay and training would come from the agencies Joe suggests plus the Department of Labor which today funds the Montana Conservation Corps. Defense may have to be left off this hook because their hands may be full funding increased recruits. The funds would also come from an added 2% tax on those with net assets over \$5mm and the elimination of the current 15% tax rate for those in hedge funds and private equity firms. Everyone in the country over some lower income level, say \$50,000, would have to pay at least 20% in taxes.

The good news is that tomorrow's 20 year olds would be much more socially conscious, learn a lot about their fellow man/woman, different religions, etc. and would contribute a lot to their community upon returning home. They also, for those who chose then to move on to college or university, would be more serious about their studies and more involved in working to improve their college communities and surrounding environments.

All this is a bit idealistic, but we need to move the electoral process back the people, who each year would be more and more inclined to participate after their NFP service. And, just think of the improvements that could be made to our infrastructure, parks and public schools. Obviously, we will have to chip away at the organizations that oppose change, such as the teachers unions in some of our major cities, and others too numerous to name.

But again, where there is a will, there is a way. I am a moderate Republican who believes we must change our ways now before we sink into a decline that echoes the decline of the Roman Empire of so many years ago. Some argue that this is already occurring. As Oliver Wendell Holmes so eloquently put it: "A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions". Or as Thomas Jefferson pointed out: "Laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind – institutions must advance also and keep pace with the times".

Sincerely,

Jamie McLane
Aboard "Wanderer's Rest"

James McLane spent two years in the Department of Health Education and Welfare and in the White House in the Nixon Administration before becoming the Deputy Director of the Cost of Living Council (1972-74). His career was in finance as a SVP and Division Executive at Citibank in NY and London and then in healthcare as CEO of Aetna Health Plans, President of NovaCare, Inc. and CEO of Healthaxis, Inc. He has served on the board of several public and private equity backed healthcare and healthcare technology companies. He is a graduate of Yale University (1961) and the Harvard Business School (1967). He served in the U.S Navy in the Pacific (1961-65), based in Japan. He was Chairman of Outward Bound USA and is still very active in the urban-based Philadelphia Outward Bound School.