

The Passy Press

Letter to the Editor

From: Haven Pell havenpell@undisclosed.com
To: Gardiner Nick enpg@thepassypress.com
Date: January 20, 2016 at 5:20:45 PM GMT+1
Subject: Re: Curbing an American Oligarchy & How to Fix It

Dear Sir

Thank you for your excellent contribution to the discussion of this important question. The idea of mandatory national service as a solution to the money-in-politics problem is not one I have seen elsewhere. Perhaps we should first consider it on its own and then ask whether it is a solution to this problem?

Some might go so far as to suggest that public education has failed in the United States but virtually all would express disappointment with today's results. Two years of productive national service, especially immediately following the end of secondary education, could be effective in providing training in exchange for useful work.

I use the words "immediately following the end of secondary education" on the theory that the two year period should begin right away for those who choose not to complete high school and immediately upon graduation for those who do. Scheduling the term of service before incurring the expense of college might also improve decision-making as to the pursuit of advanced education.

One assumes that national service would be rigorous and demanding as is today's military service, but there is a risk it might descend into a feel-good-about-yourself waste of time and money. If that concern could be avoided, the concept has great merit.

Turning now to whether it solves the money-in-politics problem, we should perhaps consider the nature of the problem itself.

You recite the well known list of conservative financial influences on politics — Citizens United, 1%-99%, haves-have nots, ALEC, Koch Brothers, PACs, Super PACs — but you omit any reference to progressive financial influences. This leads to the question: "is money in politics the problem or is the problem really better described as the money I don't agree with?"

In the interest of having ideas succeed at least to some degree on their merits rather on the strength of a battering ram of cash, I would prefer an approach more focused on the general impact of money no matter what the source.

Avoiding the purchase of political outcomes seems a worthy goal but favoring the purchase of some outcomes over others is, to me, less compelling.

If we do not have a consensus on the problem itself, solutions might be premature because if we don't know where we are going any road will get there.

Respectfully,

Haven Pell

Haven Pell is on version 6.0 as a political blogger. www.libertypell.com. Versions 1.0 - 5.0 were Navy officer, lawyer, investment banker, foundation director and investment manager. His prior career exposed him to the importance of debt in political decision-making. Three dozen years living in Washington have taught him that smartisan creates better solutions than partisan. He was educated at Institut Le Rosey, St. Paul's School, Harvard College and Fordham Law School; he is married with three grown children and two grandchildren.