

California Politics

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The thing that worries me the most about the California recall controversy is not the fact that the recall election occurred, but rather that Arnold (I can't even come close to spelling his last name) was elected with minimal discussion of the issues, his campaign consisting of the statement (spoken or otherwise) "I know what needs to be done, trust me". To me, this sets a dangerous precedent for future elections nationwide. Will Arnold betray the trust of the people who put him in office? Only time will tell.

It has been suggested by some republican colleagues in other discussions on this topic that a "real" politician would be unable to win an election without discussing the issues at hand. I agree that Arnold's fame likely carried significant weight at the polls, but the risk is still there for an articulate enough candidate to gain the trust of the people without discussing the issues, and for that candidate to take advantage of the peoples' trust should he/she win the election.

Back to the question at hand (yes, I do realize I've been off-topic for two paragraphs), I don't think allowing recall elections is in the best interests of the national government. While it is foreseeable that an elected official could fail at the job he/she is elected to do (people aren't perfect), such events are rare when compared to the number of people who have held a particular elected position in this country.

Furthermore, allowing recall elections at the national level would most likely create an unnecessarily disruptive and volatile environment for elected officials. As I understand the California law which allows recall elections, such events can happen anytime at all. In addition to the built-in stresses of serving a nation as large as ours, elected officials would be performing their jobs with the constant fear of being unseated by the voters. Now, perhaps this would discourage elected officials from taking unpopular stands, but I don't think it's an intelligent and proper solution.

With the possibility of a recall election in the air for national-level politicians, hysteria and reflex reactions would likely overtake the reasoning abilities of the voters. This phenomenon is evident even under the current setup, witnessed in the 2000 election (people saying "Clinton was horrible, I'm voting for anyone but a democrat"), and will likely be present in the 2004 election (people saying "Bush was horrible, I'm voting for anyone but him"). Not that either of those presidents were flawless, but votes should be cast for a candidate because of what he/she stands for, not because of whom he/she is not. This was part of the reasoning behind the time periods in the election cycles as they were written into the constitution.

Another aspect of the current election cycles is that they allow for relatively rapid turnover rates for public offices. The Presidential elections are held every four years, allowing for a decent period of time in office while still (usually) keeping the President in tune with what the people want. The House of Representatives holds elections every two years to provide the closest representation of the will of the people in the legislature. The Senate holds elections every six years, with the intention that senators vote their conscience and do "the right thing", rather than necessarily do what the people want all the time. This office leaves open the most room for abuse, but six years is still not an unbearable period of time to wait for another election, and new senators come in every two years (thanks to a brilliant idea of staggered election years across the country), so there is always a recycling of ideas in the Senate.

In conclusion, I believe that although recall elections have altruistic intentions, they can ultimately endanger the American political process, taking it away from the level-headed thinkers of the nation and handing it to those who decide on a whim that they don't like who's in office. I don't think that the current system should be changed, and I think that we as democrats should not

support legislation legalizing recall elections at the national level, but rather support getting educated voters to the polls on the established election days.

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