



P E R S P E C T I V E S

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Let's Have Another Party *Many Voices Make Better Democracies*

Yeah! Sounds like a great way to celebrate California achieving the status two weeks ago of the state with the lowest background infection rate of all 50 (still true as of this writing). How about a party to celebrate how much fun it is to meet friends and neighbors on Coast Village Road and State Street for dinner? Yeah, that's a good idea too. That type of "party," however, is not what this column is about.

Today, we return to the topic of how the US would enjoy a superior political situation if we were a multi-party democracy instead of the corrupt, shared oligopoly the Democratic and Republican parties use to entrench and enrich themselves. This subject, multi-party democracy, is one we covered in separate columns on 2/18/21 and on 3/11/21.

Those two articles deal with this subject in the abstract—they argue the Constitution's Framers feared the very existence of political parties at all, the history of political parties, and the strengths/weaknesses of two-party versus multi-party systems. Just last March we concluded in this very space that a "strong executive" (as has arisen in the US) matched with a multiparty system would be the best way to ensure the strength of our democracy – a necessity when faced with the enormous challenges posed by climate change, the disintegration of international norms, the side-lining of international institutions, and the assault on democracy itself that occurred on January 6th—which assault continues to the present day.

Unlike those earlier reflections, today I want to address a glaringly concrete example of what is wrong with our current two-party system. Not surprisingly, the solution to this challenge lies within the glaring idiocy currently dominating Republican party politics.

Even a significant minority of those folks still in the Republican party (about 25 percent or more people are now "former Republicans" or leaning toward leaving since the chaotic Trump years) find the situation

regarding Liz Chaney of Wyoming to be totally remarkable. At the outset, please note that my personal politics have almost nothing in common with Ms. Chaney and that I've personally been registered as an Independent for decades. Nothing which follows is intended to be partisan in any traditional sense. Rather, this analysis goes to the situation Ms. Chaney finds herself in as the third Ranking Republican in Congress (her title is Republican Caucus Chair) who will likely be dethroned by the time this column is distributed. She will likely be replaced by Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York.

The first glaring thing about this replacement is that Rep. Chaney has a voting record substantially more conservative than Stefanik, who ran originally as a "moderate." In fact, Chaney's voting record in the last two Congressional sessions was far more supportive of Trump's priorities than was Stefanik.

Yet, just last week Donald Trump came out and supported replacing Chaney with Stefanik along with the rest of the Republican hierarchy in the House. Why? What was her "crime"? Apparently, there is only one reason Chaney is being thrown under the bus: she refuses to embrace or promulgate the Big Lie that Trump won the election against Biden. This is absolutely shocking in the face of 60 separate courts finding the 2020 election was the largest and cleanest in our history; that three separate recounts in Georgia, and additional recounts that occurred in Michigan and Arizona, found no evidence of minor or widespread voter fraud of any type; Trump lost the last election by seven million votes; Trump lost both the House and Senate; and the fact that even the vast majority of elected Republicans know the Big Lie is precisely that – a complete fabrication. So, what gives? The answer lies in the distortions created by the two-party system.

The reason all those Republican officeholders are tying themselves to a shrinking political party led by a "loser"

who acts more like a Mafia Don than a former President, is that they fear they will be primaried by Trump's minions. In the two-party system, you have to survive the primary to be able to run in the general election. All those elected Republicans correctly believe that Trump can single-handedly sink their careers by having the 70 percent of the party who live in his cultish bubble vote for the candidate of Trump's choice and defeat the more traditional Republican candidate who stands on principle against the Big Lie.

And, let's face it, the Big Lie is based on the belief that our elections are unfair and can't be trusted. Nothing could be more insidious an attack on the core, fundamental principle of our democracy: elections decide who wins not the strong man, or Mafia Don, then in power.

What makes the Chaney case so interesting, however, is the very high likelihood that Chaney will lose in the primary to someone willing to carry Trump's baggage even though it means they will have less of a chance of winning in the general election. In the 2020 Congressional election, Wyoming fielded a Republican nominee, a Democratic nominee, a Libertarian nominee, a "Constitutional" nominee (a very conservative party which basically adheres to Chaney's political philosophy), and a smattering of write-in candidates.

What would happen if Chaney lost the Republican party nomination and joined up with one or more of those other entities that, together with the Democrat, garnered 32 percent of the total vote in a state where the Chaney family is literally the ruling dynasty? Do you think Dick Chaney, one of the ultimate "hardball" players in American politics for the last four decades is going to walk away from power in his own state? I don't think he'll advise Liz to pick up her marbles and go back to the ranch. No, I think Liz will decide to show the Trumpistas that she and her father have more pull in Wyoming than Trump.

Personally, I think she is right. What would be the outcome? A legitimate three-way race that would conclusively demonstrate that the fear of being primaried is not as great as the fear of turning off the vast majority of voters, particularly the growing segment of Independents, who refuse to turn the country over to a man who would be king. Yes, it would be the beginning of a multiparty system in Wyoming. It could actually be the beginning of another party—at last!

Published in the 5/13/2021 edition of the Montecito Journal