

## **Suggestions For Improving Elections**

### **March 21, 2023 ©2023 Ted H. Schaar**

After the November 8, 2022 elections I began working on a set of suggestions to improve what I viewed as an obnoxious and wasteful process. About a month later, on December 5, I e-mailed "Suggestions For Improving Elections" (below) to my federal and state elected representatives: Governor Evers; Representative Fitzgerald; and Senators Baldwin, Johnson, and Hutton (Note: originally I sent this to Dale Kooyenga thinking he was still in office); and Representative Rodriguez. I included my name, address, and telephone number.

### **Suggestions For Improving Elections**

In the months-weeks-days-hours-minutes leading up to the recent election, I received numerous e-mail, internet, television, and USPS appeals aimed at attracting my donations and vote. Some contained descriptions of candidate positions; many featured ad hominin attacks on opponents.

Conclusion? Our election process turns candidates into marketers managed by advertising agencies, poll consultants, public relations firms, etc. The goal isn't communication but persuasion and fund-raising. We need a new way and I think the following suggestions would improve the process:

1. Public financing of candidates to eliminate influence due to private financial support. This includes payment of printing costs for papers that explain candidate positions. No ad hominin attacks.
2. Political parties should internally evaluate, select, and field candidates. No general primaries.
3. Selected candidates must submit applications to the human resources department of the involved federal, local, or state government office similar to what other employment requires. These would include education and employment histories and arrest, litigation, and tax records for the previous five years. Two independent investigative agencies would verify accuracy with copies given to the press.
4. Free broadcast and webcast time for candidates on local, national, and state facilities such as Wisconsin Public Television, NPR, and PBS. Candidates explain how they stand on issues without attacking opponents. No political advertising on commercial outlets.
5. Debates that allow candidates to contrast their positions and what they will do to maintain and improve citizen lives with those of opponents. No ad hominin attacks. Refusal to participate would be grounds for disqualification.

Representative Scott Fitzgerald was the only recipient who replied—see below. But his letter did nothing more than state he appreciates my "sharing your thoughts with me and bringing election reform suggestions to my attention." Beyond "reform suggestions" there isn't any comment on what I sent.

About a month later, I resent the suggestions to those who hadn't replied but received nothing back. As a constituent who has never missed an opportunity to vote since turning 21—the required age until March 1971—I expected replies from each recipient and am irritated that only one arrived. And it paid no attention to my suggestions.

Each officeholder has a staff to help evaluate and respond to inquiries so no elected official can legitimately claim he or she was too busy. Increasing the irritation: *I help pay all their salaries and expenses!*

Lacking the civility and common courtesy to reply is a strike against each of them including Fitzgerald whose response is plain old rightwing ranting.

Probably at least a staff member or two skimmed what I sent and decided my ideas weren't worth the boss' time, the likelihood of them being adopted, virtually zero, and anyway, most politicians don't consider innovation a strength. Too bad!

Maybe some or all didn't like having to submit an application as any other employee must. Incidentally, I tried to discover whether officeholders *currently* need to submit applications but no one replied to those inquiries either so I concluded they don't. Or maybe they weren't in favor of releasing their arrest and litigation records and tax returns. Why not?

The changes I recommended were large but necessary as a recent stories in the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* and *The Guardian* make clear.

The *Journal-Sentinel* article begins: "Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge Janet Protasiewicz is spending millions to flood airwaves with two ads in this year's race for a seat on the Wisconsin Supreme Court that contain significant factual omissions in their criticism of her opponent, former Justice Daniel Kelly."

It goes on to detail what Protasiewicz' campaign claims are shenanigans perpetrated by Kelly, which his campaign denies.

Later in the article, this appears: "Protasiewicz spokesman Sam Roecker said the situations are concerning either way... 'He's [Kelly] a corrupt, right-wing partisan and Wisconsinites have already rejected him once,' Roecker said."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* March 15, 2023 "Protasiewicz campaign ads slam Kelly for failing to step away from cases involving donors

At the Milwaukee Press Club on March 14, according to the *Journal-Sentinel* story, "Kelly called Protasiewicz 'sloppy' and 'slanderous' in her ads. 'She can say a lie that is horrible in the space of 30 seconds, it takes a few minutes to disabuse people of that lie.'" Protasiewicz declined an invitation to the event.<sup>2</sup>

Kelly is supported by former dark-ages governor Scott Walker and that's enough for me to reject him. I'm not impressed by Protasiewicz' tactics either. But the brawling donation-fueled process used today makes mean-spirited foolishness practically mandatory.

And it's getting worse as detailed in a *Wisconsin State Journal* article: "About \$13.2 million has been spent on television ads since the primary, according to AdImpact, which tracks TV spending nationwide. Of that, \$8.3 million benefited Protasiewicz compared with \$4.9 million for Kelly..."<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile *The Guardian* reports: "More than \$3.9 million has poured into the Wisconsin supreme court election from individuals and groups involved with promoting election disinformation and attempts to overturn the 2020 election, according to an analysis of campaign spending...The contributions, in support of the conservative candidate Daniel Kelly, come amid a race that has broken national campaign spending records. According to a campaign finance tracker by the Brennan Center for Justice, political ad orders for the liberal county judge Janet Protasiewicz and conservative Kelly have reached at least \$20 million in anticipation of the April 4 general election."<sup>4</sup>

Nearly \$20 million spent and the electorate left to sort out likely exaggeration and smear from fact—on both sides.

My suggestions are better ways...but they need champions among elected officials. And only one I sent them to replied, and he ignored my ideas. It's discouraging. Are they really satisfied with the current archaic system? Do they, like rascal George Santos and reflexive liar Donald Trump, have things to hide?

Way back Professor DiPiazza, my poly sci instructor at the University of Wisconsin—Whitewater told my class democracy was imperfect and messy, but by the far the best we have this side of a "benevolent dictatorship" which he considered oxymoronic. Things can and do go right under our awkward system, especially when roads, sewers, water delivery, and other public works are considered. But there is a lot of room for improvement and it could start

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but the claims leave out significant facts," Corrinne Hess Molly Beckpage page 3A.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> [https://madison.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/elections/attack-lines-broaden-beyond-abortion-in-wisconsin-court-race/article\\_d73f07df-fdbe-5bf2-a17f-7712118831e4.html](https://madison.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/elections/attack-lines-broaden-beyond-abortion-in-wisconsin-court-race/article_d73f07df-fdbe-5bf2-a17f-7712118831e4.html)

<sup>4</sup> The Guardian.org Alice Herman March 14, 2023

with more sensible elections of the people who make representative government work.

\* \* \*

SCOTT FITZGERALD  
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**Congress of the United States**  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

December 12, 2022

Dear Mr. Schaar,

Thank you for taking the time to contact me on this issue. As your representative in Washington, I want to hear what matters most to you, your family, and your community. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts with me and bringing election reform suggestions to my attention.

Confidence in our election system has been put at risk after the 2020 election due to liberal public officials steamrolling and outright defying standard election procedures and processes, resulting in more than 200,000 voters submitting a ballot without showing identification. As a former state legislator, I helped create and implement our strong state election laws in Wisconsin and, since coming to Congress, I have been working hard to oppose efforts by Democrats to federalize our elections, eliminate voter ID laws, and further entrench mail-in voting. As elected officials, we have a duty to maintain the faith of our voters in the integrity of our elections.

That is why I have cosponsored several pieces of legislation that would restore faith in elections. This includes H.R. 322, the *Save Democracy Act*, introduced by Congressman Jim Banks (IN-03), which requires proof of U.S. citizenship to register to vote, prohibits ballot harvesting, and requires an audit of voting systems.

I am also a cosponsor of H.R. 4290, the *End Zuckerbucks Act*, which would prohibit tax exempt organizations like the Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) from providing funding to official election organizations. Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his wife donated \$419 million to CTCL in 2020, and the overwhelming majority of that money went to Democrat-leaning precincts. In some cases, CTCL partnered with progressive activists who were granted the same access to election materials as public officials. That is why I also joined several of my colleagues in calling on CTCL to disclose its financial records.

Finally, I am a cosponsor of H.R. 8461, the *Promoting Free and Fair Elections Act*, which prohibits federal agencies from participating in voter registration efforts or assisting nongovernmental organizations with voter mobilization activities.

I have also opposed efforts by Democrats to federalize the election process. This includes voting against H.R. 1, the *For the People Act*, which would take the constitutionally granted authority for states to conduct elections away from them while simultaneously doing nothing to address ballot harvesting or protecting U.S. citizens' right to vote. I also opposed H.R. 4, the *John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act*, which would expand the authority of the Department of Justice and Federal courts to submit changes to voting standards or practices for "pre-clearance" even if those changes are less restrictive than the current laws in other states. I even introduced an amendment to H.R. 4 in the House Rules Committee that would have made it clear that new voter ID measures are not a violation of the law. Unfortunately, this commonsense amendment was not even considered by House Democrats.

Rest assured, I will continue to support efforts to restore faith in elections while opposing any effort by the Biden Administration or House Democrats to take the election process out of the hands of state and local elected officials. I will continue to monitor current election reform bills and other election integrity related legislation.

Thank you again for contacting me. It is an honor to serve you in Congress. For more information on my work in Congress, to connect on social media, and to sign up to receive my e-newsletter, please visit <https://fitzgerald.house.gov/>. If I may be of service to you in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Scott Fitzgerald  
Member of Congress