



***Becoming One Indivisible  
Nation In the Era of  
Divisiveness***

**Class 2**

**April 23 – May 28**

# Where We Ended Class 1

## Background

### Causes of Problems

What are the elements of political, electoral and governmental processes that contribute to divisiveness, extreme partisanship and lack of effectiveness?

- **Running for re-election while serving:**
  - Inherent Conflict of Interest?
  - Diminishes time and action on governing.
  - Focus is on serving party's base voters, not on collaborating with the other party on legislation to benefit the country.
  
- **Winning re-election requires support from the party leaders, especially in primaries:**
  - Get prime committee assignments, for donations and publicity.
  - Financial support from major donors.
  - Local party members support on-the-ground campaigning.
  
- **Congressional rules give incredible power to officials by seniority and to members of majority party.**

# Background

## Are Congressional Rules Constitutional?

- Constitution is a “structure” document; no rules on “how to govern” provided.
- Each house of Congress given authority to make their own rules. Most focus on the interests of the elected officials, their parties and their donors.
- How is that working for us today?

# Background

## Divisiveness and Dysfunction – Other Aspects

Some rules made by both parties for their own benefit:

- **Gerrymandering of voting district boundaries, voting restrictions.**
- **Separate party primaries.**
- **Senate filibuster to obstruct, avoid collaboration with the minority.**
- **Single Senator can block Presidential appointments (Is it Constitutional?).**
- **Senate Majority Leader can block Supreme Court nominations (Is it Constitutional?).**
- **Putting spending and critical policy bills together with unrelated partisan policies for a single vote; or to muddy up a clean vote.**
- **There is a vote on spending that adds to the debt. Then a separate vote on the debt limit to pay borrowing needed to service the debt they voted into place. Rejecting the debt increase could lead to government shutdown or default. (appalled the debt is increasing!)**
- **Power of House Speaker and Senate Majority Party Leader to control legislation agenda, which bills come to the floor.**
- **Conflict of interest, campaign financing and other ethics violations all too frequent.**
- **Political impeachment process vs judicial process.**

# Background

## Importance of Unity

**What are the Core Elements of America's Strength?**

- 1. Democracy?**
  - 2. Personal Liberty?**
  - 3. National Unity?**
  - 4. Citizen Service to Country and Community?**
- **Does the unity, the interdependence of citizens, play any role in supporting the independence and personal liberty in America?**
  - **Do our Founding Documents have anything to say about the importance of interdependence in America?**

# Background

## Importance of Unity

**What do you think “Unity” means? Does it mean “no differences” in policy ideas? Is It important to country?**

**Does unity perhaps mean mutual dependence, or interdependence?**

**What is the importance of interdependence and service to community in a country that values personal liberty?**

- **What does the Pledge of Allegiance say about unity?**
- **What is the country’s motto?**

**Are we living up to those words today as in the recent past?**

# Background

## Importance of Unity

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- Our first government document, “The Articles of Confederation”, was a loose confederation of sovereign states and a weak Central Government. Adopted in 1777 and ratified in 1781, this approach was quickly found to result in a very weak country. It was far from a United States government.
- By 1787 a Constitutional Convention had been convened to replace these Articles with a National Constitution, which was written that year and approved by the States in 1789.
- So the first Purpose of the Constitution is clearly stated in the Preamble: “...To Form a More Perfect Union ...”
- Reflects the absence of unity under the “Articles of Confederation”.



# Background

## Challenges to Unity

The major factor influencing divisiveness in politics and dysfunction in governing is not mentioned once in the constitution.

- What is that factor?

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What is that factor? **PARTISANSHIP!**

Our first President and Vice President (and second President) both expressed concerns with that factor (see handout):

- Adams wrote to a friend at the completion of the constitutional convention in 1789: *“There is nothing which I dread as much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the largest political evil under our Constitution.”*

# Background

## Challenges to Unity

Can the United States provide personal liberty for all if we weaken the unity of the country and the commitment of citizens to serve communities, the country, and each other?

In his farewell address in 1797, Washington spoke in detail of the importance of national unity and the dangers of political parties to national unity.

➤ **Here are Washington's thoughts on Unity:**

- "The unity of government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you, it is justly so, for **it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very liberty which you so highly prize.**"

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➤ **Here are Washington's thoughts on Parties:**

- "I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the State ... Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and **warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.**"
- "This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but, **in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.**"

# Background

## Challenges to Unity

### ➤ Additional thoughts from Washington's on Parties:

-- "The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, is itself a frightful despotism. **But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism.** The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, **turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.**"

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-- "Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight), **the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.** ‘

-- "It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. **It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foments occasionally riot and insurrection.** It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions."

# Background

## Rebuilding Unity via Reform

- **Washington's Guidance on how to make changes.**
  - "If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. **But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed.**"

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- **Jefferson's Guidance on how to make changes.**
  - "I am certainly not an advocate for frequent and untried changes in laws and constitutions. ... But I know also, that **laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times.**"
- **Does this Guidance seem relevant to today's environment?**



# Background

## Rebuilding Unity via Reform

- **Can the United States provide personal liberty for all if we weaken the unity of the county and the commitment of citizens to serve communities, the country, and others?**
- **What are the changes that will rebuild our national unity?**
  - Minimize or eliminate partisan divisiveness and dysfunction in governing?
  - Increase the commitment to serving the country over self- interest, party loyalty?
  - Have a government that is more transparent and accountable?

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  - Have a government that is more transparent and accountable?
- **Is it enough to change “Who” governs to achieve these outcomes? Will elected officials from either major party lead these changes?**
- **Or do we need to change “How” we are governed? To change the Rules and Governing Processes?**
- **In a government that derives its powers from the consent of the governed, shouldn't citizens make the rules about how “we the people” prefer to be governed?**

# Background

## Developing a Solution

An effective solution requires first defining the causes of the problems we are trying to solve.

3 major factors observed as the cause of disunity, divisiveness and dysfunction

➤ **Career Self-Interest**

- Spend up to 40% of time raising funds and votes.
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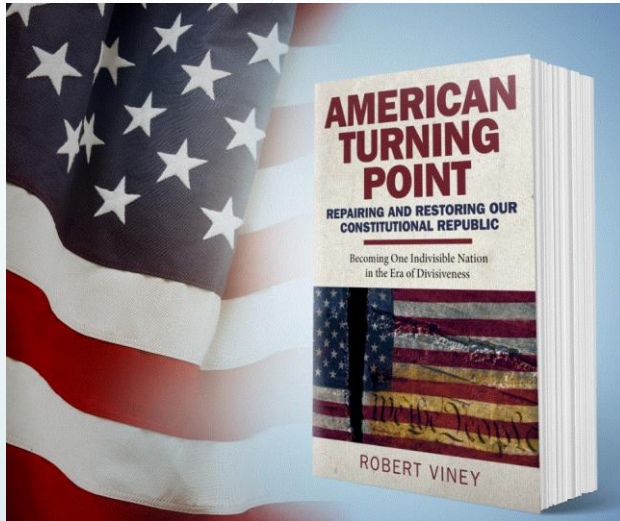
- Winning re-election requires financial support from the party leaders, local party members for on-the-ground support.

➤ **Large money contributions from special interest donors**

- Funding re-election requires major funds and large donors are key.

# Repairing and Restoring Our Constitutional Democracy

## Discussion of Changes to Minimize Divisiveness and Restore Unity



**WEBSITE:**

**[www.citizenrules.org](http://www.citizenrules.org)**

- **DETAILS OF 16 “CITIZEN RULES” (18 on Website)**
- **DETAILS OF 6 AMENDMENTS: “BILL OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY” (8 on Website) to implement the Citizen Rules**
- **“VIRTUAL” VOTING BY CITIZENS on new website**
- **CITIZEN-LED “LIMITED” CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION – CALLED BY STATES – RATIFICATION DRIVES BY STATE**
- **LED BY NEW NON-PROFIT – CITIZENS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL**

# Background

## The Solutions in the Book: How Were They Developed?

- 1. Unbiased Research on Past Congressional Actions.**
- 2. Define the key problems; the root causes of these problems, and the barriers to overcoming the problems.**
- 3. Review fact-based, non-partisan solutions that can eliminate or minimize the drivers and barriers effectively.**
- 4. Review the actions needed to enact the solutions.**

# Purpose of the Constitution

**Given Washington's and Jefferson's guidance on change, shouldn't we look to the Constitution for changes that can minimize divisiveness and restore national unity in politics and governing?**

**To guide the changes we might consider, it will be helpful to look at the FULL PURPOSE the Founders wanted the Constitution to accomplish.**

**It is important that if we change or add rules for HOW to govern, that we still need to retain the Purpose of the Constitution.**

**We said earlier that the Preamble stated one Purpose about the Constitution. Are there other statements of Purpose in the Preamble?**



**END**