An Idealized Design for Government. Part 2: Executive Branch Accountability

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Abstract

In this paper, the authors continue to build on their proposed model for incorporating randomly selected citizens into the decision-making processes of government. The first article presented a case for the benefits of random selection; proposed a lawmaking process that replaces elected, all-purpose legislatures with multiple, limited-function bodies composed of randomly selected citizens; and identified possible objections to the model (see An Idealized Design for the Legislative Branch of Government, http://stwj.systemswiki.org/?p=140). In the current article, the authors extend the model to the executive branch, discussing how redesigning the executive branch could improve accountability to the legislature and to the people.The potentialfor current executive branch designs to negatively affect performance and accountability is used to propose a new model that reduces the power of the executive branch, increases accountability, and has the potential to reduce corruption. The benefits of the model are outlined, and possible objections are addressed.

Introduction

In a previous paper in this journal (Bouricius and Schecter, 2013) we identified seven common problems with the legislative branch of government, and proposed a new model of lawmaking that would address those problems. The model is based on three features of ancient Athenian democracy: selecting legislators by lot instead of election; having multiple, limited-purpose legislative bodies instead of a single, all-purpose legislature; and using temporary jury-like bodies to make the final decisions about enacting bills into law (Hansen, 1999).

If a legislature were designed according to this model, what changes would be needed in the executive branch? In this paper, we begin to tackle this challenge – in particular, the question of how to hold the executive branch accountable to the reformed legislative branch and to the people. We first review the proposed legislative model from the previous paper. We then describe six common “patterns” in the ways that contemporary democracies provide for executive branch accountability, and the problems that we believe are associated with each pattern. We then propose pattern-changing strategies that would eliminate the problems, and use those strategies to describe a new model for executive branch accountability. We consider possible objections to the executive branch accountability proposal, and raise two important question that we haven’t yet resolved – how to allocate responsibilities for executive branch planning and budgeting, and how to expand participation to citizens outside the randomly selected bodies.

Overview of the Proposed Legislative Model

John Adams (2014) famously wrote that a legislature “should be in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large. It should think, feel, reason and act like them.” Pitkin (1967) used the term “descriptive representation” to describe the extent to which a representative body “thinks, feels, reasons and acts” like the people it is supposed to represent. In the previous paper, we proposed a legislative model using random selection (also called sortition) instead of elections to select the members of legislative bodies, in order to increase descriptive representation and diversity and reduce corruption (Bouricius and Schecter, 2013). Following is a description of how the responsibilities for each stage of the lawmaking process would be allocated among multiple randomly selected bodies, with each body having more limited power than a typical legislature has today.

Choosing Topics for Legislation

The Agenda Council, selected by “lot of the willing” (i.e. a lottery in which participation is voluntary), serving 3-year terms and well compensated, decides which topics need new laws.They get ideas for priority issues via several paths: staff, Review Panels, Policy Juries, citizens, and interest groups**.** An alternative route for initiating legislation is by petition.

Developing Bills

Once a topic is selected, there is a call for volunteers for Bill Drafting Panels (enough to accommodate anyone who wants to volunteer, 12 to 20 members each, mixed by lot or self organized, not compensated, serving long enough to draft a bill).Bill Drafting Panels would encourage a range of interests to help draft bills that the participants believe could pass review, and ultimately be adopted, by other bodies.If there are an extremely large number of Bill Drafting Panels, there could be a super-majority requirement to advance a bill to the reviewing stage.

Reviewing Bills

For each issue area, there is a larger, well-compensated Bill Review Panel, selected by lot of the willing (members can’t choose what issue area they will be assigned to). They serve rotating terms of a year or more, so they can develop some expertise in their area. Review Panels review draft bills from Bill Drafting Panels, take testimony, hold hearings, amend and combine draft bills, and produce final proposed bills by majority vote.

Voting

Each bill is voted on by a separate one-time Policy Jury (as descriptively representative as possible). Jury members meet for a period of a day to a week, listen to pro and con arguments, and vote by secret ballot, without internal debate, in order to avoid “group-think” or domination by those with high social status. The secret ballot minimizes the social pressure of voting and the risk of vote buying.

Oversight

The Rules Council (selected by lot) handles other meta-legislative tasks (e.g. establishing rules, and overseeing staff who serve Bill Review Panels and Policy Juries).The Oversight Council (selected by lot) handles oversight and evaluation of the executive branch's implementation of laws.

For more detail about the model, and its origins in the second century of Athenian democracy, see Bouricius (2013). For other proposals about incorporating randomly selected citizens into lawmaking, see Callenbach & Phillips (1985), Guerrero (2014), Leib (2004), O'Leary (2006), Sutherland (2008), and Zakaras (2010).

Patterns and Problems of Executive Branch Accountability

There are many variations in systems of executive branch accountability within the United States, and many more internationally. Nevertheless, there are a number of problematic patterns that are very common, at all levels of government. This section describes what we see as six of the most common patterns, and their associated problems. The next section will present strategies for overcoming the problems, and in the following section we will propose a model for making the executive branch much more accountable and resistant to corruption than most executive branches are today.

Pattern One: Policy Power of the Chief Executive

Chief executives (such as presidents, governors, mayors, etc.) and heads of public agencies often have substantial power to create and veto public policies. Although chief executives generally don't pass laws, it is common for chief executives to have the power to veto bills passed by the legislature, to develop plans and budgets, and sometimes to make "quasi-legislation" through alternative means such as executive orders or — in the United States — presidential "signing statements" (Cooper, 2002). In the same way, heads of public agencies often decide regulations that could be regarded as policy, in domains such as public health, education, and the environment.

Associated problems. No single individual can be descriptively representative of the broad diversity of an entire population – but a randomly selected legislature can. The epistemic quality of decision-making (policy) is enhanced through cognitive diversity, which no individual can attain (Surowiecki, 2004). Most of the framers of the United States constitution believed that only the legislative branch should have the power to make policy (Raphael, 2012). We agree.

Pattern Two: Chief Executives are Chosen by Election

At every level of government, chief executives are typically chosen by election. This pattern is so common that it is rarely questioned. Nevertheless, the practice of choosing chief executives through election has significant problems, especially when chief executives have policy-making power as described above.

Associated problems. It takes a lot of money to win an election, so groups who have lots of money have much more influence over who gets elected than groups who don't. Second, elections tend to favor

candidates who are good at campaigning and fundraising, whether or not they are good at administration of the executive branch. Third, elected executives have strong incentives to take actions that reward the people who were influential in helping them win their last election, and who will be critical in helping them win their next election. This may include donors, party leaders, and members of the media (Mayer, 2009).

Pattern 3: Oversight Bodies May Have Elected Members

Members of some oversight bodies (bodies that oversee the work of the executive branch) are chosen by election.This includes legislative committees, and non-legislative boards and commissions whose members are elected.

Associated problems. Election of members of oversight bodies brings the same problems as election of chief executives, as described above. There can also be a political party-based conflict of interest problem when elected legislators exercise oversight over elected executives. When the same political party controls both the legislative and executive branch, elected legislators may have an interest in making excuses for problems or even refusing to recognize them, in order not to damage their party's prospects in the next election. When the two branches are controlled by different parties, elected legislators may have the opposite incentive – it can be in their interest to exaggerate or invent problems, in order to put the executive's party in a bad light for the next election.

Pattern Four: Oversight Bodies May Have Appointed Members

Members of some oversight bodies are chosen by appointment. In some cases, members of boards and commissions are appointed by the chief executive, or by the legislature. Members of legislative oversight committees are often chosen by a combination of election and appointment – they may be elected to their position in the legislature, and then appointed to a committee by a legislative or party leader.

Associated problems. We see two problems with choosing members of oversight bodies by appointment. First, like election, choosing members by appointment tends to results in bodies that are not descriptively representative of the people as a whole — the demographics, life experiences, and views of the oversight bodies are substantially different from the diverse demographics, life experiences, and views of the people. Second, appointed members of oversight bodies may be influenced by personal loyalty to whomever appointed them, especially if they are appointed by a single person.

Pattern Five: No Formal Performance Review for The Chief Executive

There is usually no formal performance review of chief executives, like the performance review that executive branch administrators get from their supervisors, or that some Executive Directors of NGOs get from their Boards. The actions and words of chief executives are often criticized or praised by politicians, media, and citizens, but this is not the same as a serious performance review.

Associated problems. The lack of a formal review process greatly limits the ability of the legislative branch to hold chief executives accountable. It also deprives chief executives of the feedback they need to perform as effectively as they can.

Pattern Six: The Scope of Oversight Bodies is Too Limited

Some oversight bodies focus on particular issues, others on particular departments, and others on particular segments of the population – but usually, the whole "three dimensional spectrum" is not covered in a

systematic, integrated way. For example, many jurisdictions don't have bodies responsible for reviewing how the government as a whole serves particular geographic or demographic communities.

Associated problems: There are multiple inter-relationships between departments, issues, and communities, and an effective structure of oversight bodies needs to monitor these inter-relationships, or else there will be gaps in accountability.

Strategies for Better Executive Branch Accountability

In order to overcome the problems associated with the six patterns discussed in the previous section, we propose five strategies, which form the basis for the specific proposals about actors and roles in the next section.

First, we propose replacing the policy-making chief executive – president, prime minister, governor, mayor, etc. — with an administrator who doesn't determine policy and can't veto legislation. This would put the full policy power where it belongs – with the legislative branch.

Second, we propose that this administrator be hired by a randomly selected panel of citizens. This would eliminate the potential for corruption and undue influence that comes when chief executives are elected.

Third, we propose selecting the members of oversight bodies by lot. This would eliminate the problems of corruption and nepotism that are found when these officials are elected or appointed.

Fourth, we propose an annual, formal performance review of the chief executive. This would dramatically increase accountability of the executive branch, and give chief executives valuable feedback that they need in order to perform well.

Fifth, we propose organizing review bodies not only by department, but also by "community" and "theme." This would enable oversight of all the areas that often "fall through the cracks" when oversight bodies are organized only in one of these dimensions.

Table 1 below summarizes the patterns, problems, and proposed strategies.

Table 1*Executive branch governance – patterns, problems, and strategies*

Patterns	Problems	Strategies
1. Chief executives and their staffs have substantial power to create and veto public policies.	This limits the power of the legislature to make policy.	Change the chief executive role from policy maker to administrator and advisor.
2. Chief executives are chosen by election.	Groups with lots of money have much more influence than groups who don't.	Have a body of randomly selected

	Elections tend to favor candidates who are good at campaigning and fundraising.	citizens hire the chief executive.
	Elected executives have strong incentives to please donors, party leaders, and media.	
3. Members of some oversight bodies are chosen by election.	(same problems as election of executives, above)	Choose members of oversight bodies by lot.
	When elected legislators are from the same party as executives, they tend to overlook or minimize problems. When they are from different parties, legislators tend to exaggerate or invent problems.	
4. Some oversight bodies are chosen by appointment.	Appointed bodies are not descriptively representative of the people.	
	Members of oversight bodies can feel an obligation to be “loyal” to the people who appointed them.	
5. There is no formal performance review of chief executives.	This limits the ability of the legislative branch to hold chief executives accountable.	Institute a formal performance review of chief executives.
	Chief executives don’t get the feedback they need.	
6. Oversight bodies focus on issues, departments, or populations – but the whole “three dimensional spectrum” is not covered.	There can be gaps in accountability when important issues “fall between the cracks” of different bodies.	Create a structure of oversight bodies that covers all three dimensions.

Executive Branch Accountability Model: Actors and Roles

Chief Executive, Department Heads, and Hiring Panels

The Chief Executive. The President, Prime Minister, Governor, Mayor, etc. — would have substantially less power than she or he usually does today. The Chief Executive of a jurisdiction would be primarily an administrator and a policy advisor, not a policy maker – similar to the role of City Manager or City Administrator, used in many U.S. municipalities. The legislative branch would make most policy decisions. The primary tasks of the Chief Executive, and executive branch department heads, would be to manage

implementation of policies, to advise about policies from the perspective of implementation, and to propose policy options at the request of the legislative branch. In actual practice the distinction between policy and administration would often be “fuzzy” and contested, but the decisions would be made based on the principle of separating policy from administration.

The Chief Executive would have no power to veto legislation, or to enact “quasi-legislation” (as Presidents do in the U.S. through executive orders, for example). In the same way, department heads could not make policy by unilaterally writing regulations – the legislative branch would be the final decision-maker, unless this power was expressly delegated for a specific purpose and for a defined period, and allowed by the Rules Council. However, the Chief Executive and department heads wouldplay important roles in advising the legislative branch about legislation, and in making proposals for legislation or regulations at the request of the legislative branch.

While Chief Executives and department heads could be removed from office at any time (as described below), there would be no need for term limits. Good executives might serve for decades.

Hiring panels. The Chief Executive would not be elected. Instead, they would be chosen by a Chief Executive Hiring Panel. The panel’s members would be randomly selected from the citizenry. They would serve as long as necessary to make a hiring decision, and then disband. If someone was chosen and didn’t want to serve, they could “opt out” and be replaced by another randomly selected person. This “opt out” feature would result in a body that was more descriptively representative of the people than an “opt in” design that required people to proactively volunteer.

The Chief Executive would hire department heads, but these appointments would require review and confirmation by other randomly selected, one-time Hiring Panels. In most cases the confirmation procedures would likely be pro forma, but the confirmation requirement would act as a check on hiring decisions based on nepotism or cronyism.

Review and Accountability

Performance review panels. In order to hold the Executive Branch accountable, a randomly selected Performance Review Panel would periodically review the performance of the Chief Executive, and similar panels would review the performance of each department head (or group of department heads, depending on the size of the departments). Performance review of middle and lower level executive branch staff would be handled entirely within the executive branch, by the administration and the public employees’ union.

If a Chief Executive were fired, the Performance Review Panel would not have the power to hire their replacement, because this would give the Performance Review Panel an incentive to corruptly fire an incumbent in order to choose a favorite of their own, and perhaps get a corrupt reward. Instead, a separate Hiring Panel would choose the new Chief Executive.

Performance Review panels would review the performance of executives and their organizations, based on goals and constraints in the plan and the budget, and require corrective action as needed. They would also provide feedback to planning bodies about possible changes to plans and budgets. A Review Panel could also initiate a procedure to fire an executive, but a randomly selected Accountability Jury would make the final decision.

Performance Review Panels would be organized along three dimensions. Some of them would review the performance of particular departments. Others would review the performance of the Executive Branch as a whole in terms of outcomes for particular communities (geographic, ethnic, age, etc.). Others would review the performance of the Executive Branch in terms of particular issues, such as public safety, environment, and social justice.

Accountability juries. When a Performance Review Panel initiated a firing procedure, a randomly selected Accountability Jury would hear the arguments, weigh the evidence, and make the final decision. When a Chief Executive fired a department head, that person would have the right to appeal to an Accountability Jury, who could decide to uphold the executive's decision or to re-instate the fired staff member. Accountability Juries would be much like criminal juries – very descriptively representative, serving for a short time, excused from work, and paid a stipend.

Setting the Rules and Supporting the Process

Rules council. The Rules Council would make the rules for the processes of hiring and firing the Chief Executive, and reviewing the performance of the Executive Branch. This separation of powers would reduce the incentives to make rules "strategically," in order to increase the chances of particular short-term outcomes. Rules Council members would be randomly selected from among people who had previously served on some other randomly selected body, so that they would have first-hand experience with the current rules. They would serve 3-year terms (with one third of members replaced each year), but they would not be allowed to serve consecutive terms. They would be well compensated. If someone was chosen and didn't want to serve, they could "opt out" and be replaced by another randomly selected person. Because of the long term and the challenging (and for many people, uninteresting) work, it is likely that many people would decline service, and thus this body would not be as descriptively representative as a short-term policy jury. However, it would be far more descriptively representative than any existing legislature, board or commission.

Oversight council. This body would monitor the processes of executive branch accountability (as described above), to ensure that the rules were followed, and also alert the Rules Council in cases where observation of practice indicated that the rules might need changing. This body would not make rules, hire or fire executives, or review performance. However, they could initiate and refer cases to a Performance Review Panel or Accountability Jury. The Oversight Council's members would be selected by lot. If someone was chosen and didn't want to serve, they could "opt out" and be replaced by another randomly selected person. Oversight Council members would serve 3-year terms (with one third of members replaced each year), but they would not be allowed to serve consecutive terms. Oversight Council members would be well compensated.

Support staff. When oversight bodies get their information from staff members of the bodies that they are supposed to oversee, it can hinder their independence and their ability to supervise effectively. Therefore, these oversight bodies would require the assistance of their own professional support staff, organizationally separated from the staff in the executive branch.

How the Model Could Adapt to Change

As social conditions and people's values change over time, even the best design can become less and less beneficial to the people who have to live with it. The ancient Athenians made substantial changes in their democracy over a period of two hundred years, gradually evolving the system that inspired our proposals.

Changing a political system is difficult. Almost inevitably, there will be people with power who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. The people who are engaged in politics – politicians, lobbyists, NGOs, involved citizens — often have most of their attention taken up with particular policy issues, leaving little attention left for improving the political system itself. Over time, political processes can become taken for granted, making it hard to even imagine alternatives, let alone implement them.

We have only begun to think about how the model for executive branch accountability described in this paper (and the legislative branch model proposed in our previous paper) could be adapted over time. However, we will suggest four strategies.

First, in our previous paper (and summarized in this paper), we proposed a legislative process which would be much more democratic, and much less vulnerable to corruption, than processes based on all-purpose elected legislatures. Constitutional/systemic review and change would be a permanent issue area for the Agenda Council, with its own dedicated Review Panel to review new proposals. Anyone could volunteer to participate in an Interest Panel to develop a proposal for changing an aspect of their political system (a constitutional amendment, for example), and submit it to the Agenda Council. If the Agenda Council refused to put the proposal on the legislative agenda, citizens could organize a petition drive which, if successful, would over-rule the objections of the Agenda Council and put their proposal on the agenda.

Second, there would be a mandatory "constitutional convention" on a recurring basis – say, every 10 years. The purpose of this convention would be to review and evaluate the political system as a whole, and decide about changes. Ratification of changes would only require a simple majority vote, not a supermajority, in order to give the current citizens as much power as the ones who voted on the last constitution.

Third, there would be a permanent organizational unit whose job would be to promote public conversations about possible changes to the political system, to do research that supported those conversations, and to publicize the results of the conversations and the research (Panshin, 1968). They would present their findings to the Agenda Council, the people as a whole, and as preparation for Constitutional conventions. The challenge would be to design the right relationship between this unit, the legislative process, and the executive branch, so that this new unit wouldn't become either a "captive" of the legislative or the executive branch, or "voices crying in the wilderness" whose ideas never get seriously considered.

Possible Objections, and Our Answers

Elimination of Citizen's Voting Rights

Why should I give up the right to vote for my mayor, or governor, or president? One election every few years can't possibly achieve the goal of holding your mayor, governor, or president accountable to the people. The design we've proposed could provide much more accountability than any version of elections, and a greater chance for ordinary people to play a role in governance. Because the power of an individual vote is vanishingly small, it is not rational for voters to devote the time and energy necessary to really learn about incumbents or challengers (Somin, 1998). Accountability Juries and Hiring Juries would provide better

incentives for members to become well-informed, because of their small size and focused mandates.

Voting as the Essence of Democracy

But the right to elect our leaders is the very definition of democracy, isn't it? That has been a widely held idea for the last few hundred years, but definitions change. The original Greek word for democracy simply means "rule of the people." From the time of the ancient Greeks (Aristotle and Plato) through the Age of Enlightenment (Rousseau and Montesquieu), elections were seen as inherently *aristocratic*, while random selection was seen as fundamental to democracy (Manin, 1997). We agree.

Accountability of the Chief Executive

If a randomly selected group of people chooses the chief executive, and then disbands, what happens to accountability? Another statistically representative body of citizens – a Review Panel – would regularly review the performance of the chief executive, and would have the power to initiate a recall procedure. This Review Panel would be much more representative of the interests and views of the people than any elected legislature is. Unlike the general electorate, the Review Panel would have time and the staff support they need to seriously evaluate the performance of the chief executive on a regular basis. That's a lot more accountability than one election every four years, with the outcome heavily influenced by which candidate can spend the most money.

Accountability of the Randomly Selected Bodies

But what about these randomly selected bodies? Nobody elected them – so who are they *accountable to?* They are accountable to their own consciences – because as a group, each of these bodies is a statistically representative sample of the people as a whole. They are likely to act in the same way as the entire population would, if the entire population had an incentive to become informed and the opportunity to deliberate – certainly, much more likely to act this way than an elected legislature.

Competency of General Citizens to Serve

Ordinary people selected by lot couldn't possibly carry out these responsibilities. We already trust ordinary people, with far less information than Hiring Panels and Accountability Juries would have, to elect executives, and to decide whether they should be recalled. We trust randomly selected juries to decide whether or not we go to prison. It is not necessary for every member of a body to be intelligent and competent, in order for the group to function effectively. The intelligence of the group is magnified beyond that of any individual due to the cognitive diversity allowed by random selection. There have been many promising experiments in which randomly selected people deliberated about policy questions (Crosby, Kelly & Schaeffer, 1986; Dienel and Renn, 1995; Fishkin, 2009, Warren & Pearce, 2008). In each case, for the group to be competent as a whole, it is not necessary for each member to be fully competent individually.

Time Commitment for Service

Most people won't have time for this kind of commitment. Many people serve on trial juries now, because the period of service is usually short and their employers are legally required to excuse them from work. The same could be true for our proposed short-term bodies that would make final decisions about legislation, and about whether or not to fire executives. The longer-term jobs would be full time, though for limited terms, and well compensated. Although it's true that fewer people would be willing to make that level of commitment, there should be enough of them to fill all the positions, with a much more representative

sample of the people than any elected legislatures or appointed commissions would have.

Department Heads Would Have More Than One Boss

If the department heads have to answer to the Chief Executive, and also to their Review Panels, then they're working for two bosses. Their "boss," in the traditional sense, would still be the Chief Executive. They would also be subject to the oversight of the Review Panels, which would provide an independent check on the power of the Chief Executive, to limit the potential for corruption. Many public agencies already have an independent governance body separate from their departmental chain of command, and it doesn't prevent them from doing their jobs.

The Chief Executive's Authority Would be Too Limited

This design would make the Chief Executive too weak to run the government. We believe, as most of the framers of the United States Constitution did, that the executive's job should be to carry out the will of the people, as determined by the legislative branch – and that therefore, the chief executive should be subordinate to the legislative branch (Raphael, 2012). In many U.S. cities, City Managers or City Administrators run the ongoing work of government effectively, while being subordinate to the local legislature.

This Model is Too Complicated

Creating all these different bodies makes things much too complicated. We need to make government simpler! We think that the goals of making the executive branch more accountable to the people, more effective, and less subject to corruption are more important than making the structure of government as simple as possible. We live in a complex world, and an overly simple government structure will not produce good results – indeed, as Ross Ashby (1956) and Stafford Beer (1979) pointed out in their groundbreaking work on cybernetics, no regulatory system can be effective if it isn't complex enough to handle the complexity of what it regulates. Simplicity is important in an electoral system because voters are generally not well informed. But in a design such as we propose, randomly selected citizens in governance bodies will have the time and incentives to fully understand the issues they're dealing with.

The Cost Would be Prohibitive

This would cost a lot of money – and government is too expensive already. This design would save all the public money spent on administering elections for chief executives, and all the private money spent on campaigning for those offices. We suspect that the current system might actually cost more money than the cost of the citizen bodies we propose. But more importantly, if this design makes governance substantially more democratic and more effective, any additional costs (above the savings from eliminating elections) would still be much less than the cost of ineffective, undemocratic, and corrupt governance.

Implementation

This sounds great in theory, but how you would get it implemented? Certainly you'll face the determined opposition of politicians and special interests who benefit from the system we have now. Until you can explain that, isn't this design just an academic exercise?

Many stunning political reforms have been implemented in history, including the toppling of monarchies and dictatorships. Sometimes fundamental reform starts incrementally. In Australia, the City of Canada Bay

recently gave decision-making power over its municipal budget to a jury of randomly selected citizens (Thompson, 2012). In the United States, the State of Oregon now has a Citizen Initiative Review Process in which randomly selected citizens review all ballot initiatives and publish their conclusions in the ballot information that is mailed to all the voters (Gastil & Knobloch, 2010).

But even if without any obvious path to implementation, thinking about what form of government would be desirable to implement is far from a mere academic exercise – from our perspective, it's much easier to think about implementation if you have a clear, compelling vision of what you want to implement.

Economic Inequities

In the United States, and many other countries, a small minority of the people is far wealthier than the rest, and this group dominates the political system. Until you change the economic system, won't the "one percent" find a way to either prevent any *democratic reform, or sabotage it if it does get implemented?*

We agree that inequality of wealth and power is a significant obstacle to democracy. We also believe that economic system change is just as important as political system change, and that the two are interconnected. However, we don't see changing the economic system as a prerequisite for changing the political system – instead, we think of the two efforts as being in parallel, and mutually supportive. In addition, it would be a mistake to assume that all of the wealthiest members of society would oppose political change. Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, one of the wealthiest men in Australia, funded the New Democracy Foundation, which is arguably doing the best work in the world on incorporating randomly selected citizens into political decision-making.

Responsibility for Planning and Budgeting

You didn't write about planning and budgeting, but these functions are critical in setting policy, and they need to be democratized. In your design, who would do planning and budgeting – the chief executive, or some randomly selected bodies, or a combination of the two?

While these tasks might be approached using our legislative model, the challenge is how a jury-like body can get the "big picture," rather than just a particular piece. We're thinking that these activities would be carried out by a combination of the chief executive, their staff and randomly selected bodies, but we haven't come up with a design yet. That is one of our next tasks, and we would welcome ideas from readers.

Opportunities for Participation

Even with all these randomly selected bodies, only a small minority of people would play a role in making political decisions. What kind of participation would be available for the rest of us?

The legislative side of our model involves a vast number of citizens for relatively short periods of time, with new juries for each proposed, federal, state or local law. The number of citizens in meaningful decision-making positions in this model would be far higher than under the systems in most countries now. In addition, in our previous paper on the legislative process, we described ways that citizens could put issues on the agenda by petition. There has now been a great deal of experience with different methods of public deliberation, all of which could be compatible with the model we describe. However, although we think that the legislative and executive model described here would provide much more opportunity for participation than most current political systems, we don't think we have an adequate answer yet to the question of how to make participation as close to universal as possible.

Conclusion

We have described six common characteristics or “patterns” in the way that contemporary democracies operate the executive branch that have an impact on its accountability, and the problems that we believe are associated with each pattern. We then proposed pattern-changing strategies, and a new model for executive branch accountability that would overcome the problems, based on the use of multiple randomly selected citizen bodies

We believe that this model (combined with the legislative model described earlier) would greatly increase the democratic accountability of the executive branch. Nevertheless, important questions remain – in particular, how to “democratize” the process of planning and budgeting, and how to expand meaningful participation beyond the members of the randomly selected bodies we propose. We would greatly welcome comments and ideas from readers.

Author’s Biographies

Terry Bouricius received a bachelor of arts in political science from Middlebury College in 1976. In 1981, he was elected to the Burlington (VT) City Council, becoming the first Citizens Party candidate elected in the United States. After a decade on the City council, he was elected, as a Progressive, to the Vermont House of Representatives. After stepping down in 2001, he worked with FairVote, the Center for Voting and Democracy, as an election reform policy analyst, focusing on ranked choice voting. He is currently an election administrator for non-profit organizations, and is working on a book about sortition.

David Schecter has Master’s degrees in Cybernetic Systems and in City and Regional Planning. He has worked in information technology in the private sector, in economic development for the City of Oakland, and done freelance project work for many nonprofits and community organizations, including Policy Link, Urban Habitat, PODER, and the Berkeley Ecology Center. He is currently working for San Francisco Supervisor John Avalos on a project to create a municipal bank.

We would welcome comments on this article. Readers can email Terry Bouricius at terryb@burlingtontelecom.net and David Schecter at davidsschecter@gmail.com.

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