

Who is Working for Who?

As you read through the Federalist Papers and the US Constitution, you get the clear impression that the original intent of the Founders was to establish a government that would be working *to form a more perfect union*, to carry out the will of its citizens.

So.... Why is the current approval rating for Congress so low? And because of the cumulative debt amount that the US government has managed to run up, and the significant tax burdens that the government has put upon both the current and future generations, is it unreasonable that so many citizens now feel that they are working for the government, rather than the way it was originally intended?

Our Editorial Board believes that we are seeing the result of something that the Founders were concerned about from the very beginning. In Federalist Paper # 47 one of the important questions was whether any powers transferred to the US government would be unnecessary or improper, and whether there might be a situation where that power would be perverted to the detriment of the public. Also, the title of Federalist Paper # 57 is *The Alleged Tendency of the New Plan to Elevate the Few at the Expense of the Many Considered in Connection with Representation*, and in that essay there was a warning about the potential for the sacrifices of the many (the public) being used for the "aggrandizement" of the few (ie, our elected representatives).

Let's pause, and make it clear that we totally support and applaud the concept of Public Service. We recognize that elected officials are putting themselves out there, suspending their private lives while campaigning for, and serving in public office, so that they can serve the public good. That was the original intent. However, this fear has always been there from the very beginning, that the "public good" can easily be supplanted with the "personal good" or self-aggrandizement of the elected official - whether it be for personal financial gain or simply for the intangible value of "power".

As we have noted elsewhere on our website, the primary recommendation that we are putting forth to counter the potential self-aggrandizement of the individual elected official (at the expense of the general public) is to implement term limits for all elected "executive" and "legislative" positions. We feel that there is a lot of wisdom in the 22nd Amendment - - We The People finally got smart, and amended the US Constitution, to implement term limits for the US President. We feel that this same type of wisdom should now also be applied to all elected "executive" and "legislative" positions at both the federal and state levels of government. Our Editorial Board also supports the concept put forth in the 22nd Amendment regarding one re-election possibility. This is the means by which We The People can provide our feedback to that individual on whether they have been effective in fulfilling their obligations and responsibilities to the citizens, and if appropriate, the citizens can choose to re-elect that individual. However, at the end of the second term of public service, we will say "thank you" to that individual, and ask them to go back to their personal life (which could include trying to get elected to a different federal or state government position). We no longer want to have an entrenched "entitled" government bureaucracy permanently holding on to elected positions. These executive and legislative positions are not "owned" by that individual, they are available to be "rented" to our elected officials for a maximum of two terms. We simply can't afford the status quo any longer.

Although our Editorial Board shares the concern expressed by the country's Founders regarding the possible self-aggrandizement of our elected officials, we are just as concerned about the

aggrandizement of the bureaucracies that have been put into place to support our elected officials. We have this concern because we can clearly see the connections between the two. The “bureaucracies” are many - - the various federal and state agencies and “service departments”, the public sector unions, and the various lobbyist organizations that seek to influence the policies of the federal and state governments.

Back in the days when many of our Editorial Board members were getting ready to graduate (whether from high school or from college) we were faced with some very fundamental personal decisions about what to do with our lives. Many years ago, part of those personal decisions included assessing whether we should enter the “private sector” or the “public sector”. A key decision point has been, and always will be, financial. “Back then” the tradeoff was to enter the private sector and compete for the potentially higher (potentially unlimited) financial rewards of joining the capitalistic economic system, or to settle for a comparable (but lower paying position) in the public sector. Unfortunately, what has transpired over the past several years is that the “benefits” of public sector life have risen to the point where the private sector now feels like it is working for the public sector.

How did this happen? Well, first of all, it is very easy for our elected officials to support their bureaucracy(s) that put them into their (permanent) elected office to begin with. Second, it’s very easy for our elected officials to spend OPM (Other People’s Money) rather than having to make the difficult financial decisions that people in the private sector need to deal with every day. And it is even easier for our elected officials to promise future guarantees to their bureaucracy(s) regarding future pension benefits that they don’t even need to fund currently, as they can easily push these costs on to future generations.

Our Editorial Board has four recommendations. As mentioned above, our first recommendation is to institute Term Limits, so that We The People (not the bureaucracies) can elect people into executive and legislative positions, who are motivated to serve the Public Good, rather than the Personal Good.

The second recommendation is that our elected officials re-establish the differential between private sector pay and public service pay. When you consider the level of unemployment in the country (some of which can be attributed to the government’s policies) it should not be a problem to continue to be able to find qualified people for governmental “service department” positions.

Our third recommendation is that elected “executive” officials manage their responsibilities like an executive in the private sector. Accordingly, they should come in to office with two objectives - to evaluate the processes and efficiencies of the service departments that will become their responsibility, and to evaluate the competency and effectiveness of the public sector employees in those departments. Candidates who are running for executive positions need to campaign on these two issues. They need to know what they’re running for and they should also possess a knowledge of the governmental employees who will be working for them. If that candidate has a better idea on how to execute the responsibility of their office, that is the candidate the people should elect. Similarly, candidates running for legislative positions should campaign by stating what legislation they intend to pursue, to make the country (or their state) better. However, please see our conversation piece entitled *There ought to be a law (or not)*.

Our final recommendation is in regards to fixing the problems (and the “upside down” position) that we have managed to get ourselves into regarding the compensation and pension benefits of people

employed in the public sector versus the private sector. Please see our Conversation Piece on *Governmental (Public) Pension Obligations*.

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