

A PROPOSAL: DEMOCRACY 2000

Theme:

The "Democracy 2000" project will give each American the greatest possible control over their government through the power of new technology. The goal is simple and dramatic: use new technologies to guarantee Americans instant access to public information and resources, and the greatest possible participation in the running of their nation. In short, creating the infrastructure for democracy in the 21st century.

Means:

A public commission of high technology business people, members of the Administration, and citizens will be appointed as an advisory panel to the President. The "Democracy 2000 Commission" will report back to the President within 8 months. The Commission will describe how the mandates listed below can be met.

Mandates:

The President will charge the Commission to describe how:

- * Every federal governmental form can be made available via computer for downloading by any American by the year 2000. No more trips to the federal building.
- * Every government agency can be made available to questions and suggestions by computer by the year 2000. It should be possible to submit questions and comments 24 hours a day and receive answers the next day. No more waiting on hold for someone to answer the phone.
- * Every federal informational document, documents now available from Pueblo Colorado, can be available by computer. The resources of the government should be at every citizen's fingertips.
- * Every public library in the country can have a computer available networked to the "Democracy 2000" databases. No citizen should be further than their library from this information.
- * An 800 number can be made available to explain to citizens how to use the database and where their closest library is. Everyone will be able to take advantage of this technology.

- * The Commission should report on possible future uses of giving power to people via technology-- including receiving information on a regular basis involving the community and its environment, legislative information regarding Congressional members, Judicial opinions, and Executive branch action. Finally, the Commission should report on how the plan can be implemented at no cost to the taxpayer through the use of cuts to wasteful spending and use of public/private partnerships.

The Announcement:

The announcement should be made by the President via an electronic town hall meeting. This virtual meeting should be made open to any citizen who logs on, as well as broadcast over the television.



DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL

Date: 9/17/99

To:

TOM FREEDMAN

From:

ANNA RICHTER

Telephone:

67431

Subject:

VOTER TURNOUT

Pages:

3

(Including this cover sheet)

Comments:

SECOND FLOOR WEST WING ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20502
TELEPHONE (202) 456-6515 ♦ FACSIMILE 456-2878

March 5, 1999

President William Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

The purpose of this letter is to request that you establish a non-partisan National Commission on Voter Turnout to determine why a lower percentage of Americans participate in elections than in any other major nation and to make recommendations as to how we can improve this situation, and, by extension, revitalize our democracy.

The current situation is not only an embarrassment; it threatens the underpinnings of our democracy. Several months ago, Germany held national elections, and 80 percent of its voters went to the polls. It is not uncommon for countries throughout the world to have voter turnouts of more than 70 percent. On November 3rd, by comparison, only about 36 percent of American voters participated in our state and national elections. This was the lowest voter turnout since 1942, despite a 4 million increase in registered voters. Two years ago, during a presidential election, less than 50 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. This means our country's leadership is being chosen by a minority of the population, which is the antithesis of representative democracy.

Perhaps most disturbingly, our sons and daughters are the least likely to vote. A recent survey conducted for the National Association of Secretaries of State estimated, incredibly, that fewer than 20% of those 24 years of age or younger voted in the national election in November, 1998. The survey also found widespread cynicism and disengagement in the 18-24 age group. As a result, only 26 percent of the survey's respondents said that being involved in democracy and voting were priorities. Only 25 percent could correctly answer three basic questions - the name of the Vice-President, the name of the Governor of their respective state, and the length of a term for a Member of the House of Representatives. "Young people," the report concludes, "have the distinct sense that politics is not about them."

Tragically, the United States has the lowest voter turnout of any industrialized nation, and the situation is getting worse. It is clear that millions of Americans have become dangerously alienated from their own political process, and the concept of representative democracy is in peril.

A National Commission on Voter Turnout would bring together some of the most knowledgeable people in the country to provide us with information we need to determine the what are the best steps we can take to correct the decline in voter participation. This Commission should also explore what other countries are doing to achieve higher voter turnouts as well as the innovative practices taking place in various states in our country. The Commission members should also take a hard look at the role modern technology can play in increasing citizen participation in our elections.

More than 200 years ago, when countries throughout the world were being ruled by monarchies and autocrats, our forebears developed the most democratic governmental system of its time. We should be deeply concerned that, today, with the majority of our citizens not voting, and with political campaigns heavily influenced by the financial contributions, we risk becoming one of the least democratic nations in the industrialized world. Now is the time for us to come together to revive America's democracy.

We hope very much that you will give serious consideration to establishing a National Commission on Voter Turnout.

We look forward to speaking with you about this enormously important issue.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,



Bernard Sanders
U.S. Congressman



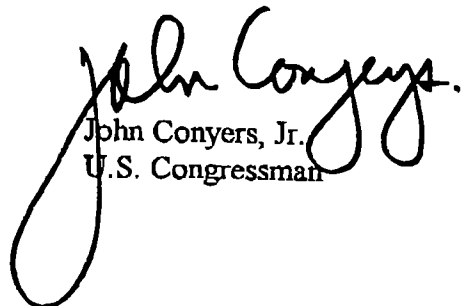
Sherwood L. Boehlert
U.S. Congressman



David Bonior
U.S. Congressman



Tom Campbell
U.S. Congressman



John Conyers, Jr.
U.S. Congressman

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*John
Turner*

DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL

Date: 9/15/99

To: Tom Freedman

From: Eric Liu

Telephone: ~~FAX~~: 67431

Subject: National Commission on Voter Turnout

Pages: 3 (Including this cover sheet)

Comments:

For Mtg Thursday Room 211 OEDB 10:30AM

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

299428

PL

March 5, 1999

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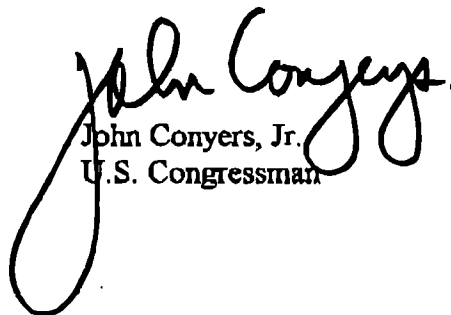
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