



# The 1776 Syndicate

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By Rob Natelson

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The phrase “Our Democracy” has become ubiquitous in “progressive” political output. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is fond of it, as is Vice President Kamala Harris. It also has become common in congressional bills.

But you shouldn’t confuse Our Democracy with real democracy. The initial modifier serves to debase the noun—much as “sub-human” means less than human or “social justice” rationalizes acts of individual injustice.

Conservatives sometimes answer the phrase “Our Democracy” by responding that our form of government is not supposed to be a pure democracy. That misses a larger point: “Our Democracy” is not any kind of democracy at all.

Well-functioning democracy rests on the rule of law, a fact recognized since the time of Pericles (c. 495–429 BCE) (pdf). The rule of law requires that laws be applied impartially. It also requires that those seeking change do so through established processes, not through violence. Violence is a threat to democracy.

Our Democracy is different. Only some kinds of violence are threats. Attorney General Merrick Garland, for example, claims the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot was an “assault on our democracy.” So participants are being punished harshly and sometimes disproportionately.

By contrast, the widespread, months-long, organized, deadly and insurrectionary Black Lives Matter/Antifa riots were just fine—or at least understandable. Ditto all those prior incidents in which “progressives” wrote the playbook for Jan. 6: their 2011 seizure of the Wisconsin state capitol, their 2017 storming of the Supreme Court and invasion of the U.S. Capitol, their 2018 take-over of the Senate office building. And their countless other sit-ins, lie-ins, and other unhygienic occupations with which they have defiled public spaces and private property over the last six decades.

“My violence good, yours bad.” Where the left holds sway, the rules change according to the persons to whom they are applied. I saw this repeatedly during my 25 years in academia.

Democracy honors the rule of law; Our Democracy does not.

Much the same applies to voting. “Progressives” such as President Joe Biden claim that voter integrity standards are inconsistent with Our Democracy. Of course, virtually all the election bills under recent state legislative consideration would have been considered unremarkable—or even too liberal—just a few years ago. The most important proposal, voter ID, is standard in Western-style democracies.

But apparently Our Democracy requires a mass of unverified or semi-verified voters who can cast ballots in who-knows-what conditions from who-knows-where. In Our Democracy, we ignore (or promote) the risk that fraudulent votes will offset real ones.

Due to a series of Supreme Court decisions initiated by *Roe v. Wade*, national abortion policy is now fixed by nine unelected justices with life terms. You might think this is undemocratic. Yet “progressive” groups tell us this is perfectly consistent with Our Democracy. The American Constitution Society (an organization of lefty law professors and law students) suggests that efforts to overrule *Roe* are an attack on Our Democracy (pdf).

The Supreme Court’s foray into marriage policy also highlights the difference between Our Democracy and the real thing. Democratically elected state legislatures used to limit civil marriage to one man and one woman. From 1998 to 2014, there were 30 state referenda confirming this policy. The advocates of traditional marriage won of all these referenda, mostly by powerful super-majorities.

In 2015, however, the Supreme Court imposed same-sex marriage on the entire country (pdf). To us rubes, this sounds undemocratic. But the Enlightened Left knows better. Any attempt to move the issue back to the people or their elected representatives would be an attack on Our Democracy.

Montana, my long-time home, was for many years a surprisingly liberal state. Politics were dominated by public sector unions, by other beneficiaries of government favors, and by a uniformly liberal daily press. Aside from gun issues and some social issues, liberals mostly ran the state. The desires of the conservative minority usually didn’t count for much. I didn’t care for this, but it was democracy.

Over the last few years, Montana has become more conservative. Every statewide elected official (other than one U.S. senator) and both houses of the legislature are now Republican. Naturally, they’ve adopted more conservative policies. But instead of responding to those policies democratically, “progressives” want the courts to reverse them. According to the left-of-center Bozeman Daily Chronicle:

A recent memo produced by legislative staff said that, as of November, state attorneys had spent over 1,800 hours defending challenges to laws passed in the 2021 session. And that doesn’t include time spent by plaintiffs’ lawyers on the challenges. The laws in question addressed gun rights, judicial appointments, abortion access, voting rights and transgender issues. The legislative memo addressed 14 lawsuits challenging 18 laws ....

The Chronicle should have told the “progressives” they were acting like sore losers— that they should quit whining to the judges and fight harder at the next election.

But folks at the Bozeman Chronicle are “Our Democracy” fans. So instead they opined that lawmakers elected by conservative majorities shouldn’t pass so many conservative laws! Our Democracy requires conservative lawmakers to disregard those who elected them.

As you can see, Our Democracy doesn’t respond to the will of the majority, as real democracy does. Our Democracy is more like a Third World pseudo-democracy, where hot-shots from the elite classes use electoral manipulation and other anti-democratic means to fight for supremacy in centralized and corrupt political environments

Consistent with this conclusion is the support that Our Democracy advocates, such as the Brennan Center for Justice, give to the National Popular Vote initiative (NPV). As I have explained elsewhere, NPV is a mechanism by which government employees, far left university towns, and corrupt big-city political machines could team up to “elect” candidates rejected by most of the country.

That’s how it often works in the seven nations (all in the Third World) that employ the NPV pure-plurality system. The current president of Panama, for example, was elected in 2019 with only 33 percent of the vote. Sixty-seven percent of Panamanians voted against the “winner” but got him anyway. A perfect scenario for Our Democracy.

“Our Democracy” really looks like “Their Oligarchy.” Or like some of those other “democracies” the left has erected over the years: The Democratic People’s Republic of (North) Korea comes readily to mind, as does the former (East) German Democratic Republic.

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