

Three could be lucky number for America

In western cultures the number three has been considered lucky for many years. It is the number of continuity (two parents and a child), figures highly into Christianity and with the three-branch system of government, comes into U.S. politics as well. So why not three major political parties?

According to an August *New York Times*/CBS News poll, 55 percent of Americans would support the forming of a third political party. While this does not say they would vote outside of the current two-parties, it does raise the chances for an "outsider" to take over the Oval Office.

With the federal government set up as it is, the Executive branch led by a political independent could benefit the country in many ways.

For starters, a "non-politician" president could generate more support from the American public. With the current Republican/Democrat split, fewer than 26 percent of Americans say they believe national officeholders are doing a good job.

This recreated, three-pronged government could provide clearer political identities to the American people. The Supreme Court would remain unchanged; Congress could remain run by politicians, and the president could serve as an interpreter of politics for the common person.

The public does not question the political background of Supreme Court justices, even though they are on the same level of the president. While it is obvious that the president needs an adequate political background, it is also important to have strong social and economic experience. Politicians are not the only pool of candidates with these qualities.

Secondly, an independent president would once again divide government's three branches into separate entities.

While The *New York Times*/CBS poll reported that 61 percent of voters thought an independent president would have problems dealing with Congress, an attempt at this system would not be out of line. Rather than grid-locking itself with bipartisan bickering, Congress would have to work as a cohesive branch.

Thus far, there is no sign that an independent could not make a fair showing in the next campaign. Indeed, with dissatisfaction with the two-

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party system growing, the independent could capture a great deal more of the vote than H. Ross Perot did in 1992.

I have been disappointed in the past few years with the major parties' inability to stick to their basic party lines. I was as hurt by President Clinton's unwillingness to fully support gays in the military as I was by the Republican party's instability when dealing with abortion. A third party could force the Democrats and Republicans to stake out their beliefs more clearly.

With more obvious differences it would be easier for voters to pick a candidate they identified with. The third party could decrease apathy and present a real choice for the American public — not between the lesser of two evils.

While I am not ready to cast my ballot, I do not reject the idea of voting for a third-party candidate. At this stage, it's important not to get so caught up in all the "support for change" that the issues themselves are ignored.

One problem with Perot's election bid in 1992 was that it was so open-ended. It identified problems with this nation but provided no solutions. While I could easily identify the major platforms of both Clinton and Bush, Perot's campaign seemed to be based on what he was not: Republican or Democrat.

More importantly, the Executive office should not be closed to someone simply because he or she does not identify with a major party. The American people will trust the government only when they feel empowered and represented by it.

The next presidential election could either make or break the idea of a three-party system. It's too early to predict a winner, but unless partisanship is forgotten and the real issues are addressed, the loser is already obvious — the voters.

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OPINION

Kay Krautscheid

No big deal...
(it's only your future.,)

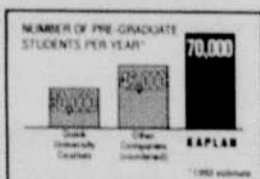


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