University of Nevada, Reno

Representation and Direct Democracy:
The Influence of Initiatives and Referendums.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science

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May, 2009
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entitled

Representation And Direct Democracy: The Influence Of Initiatives And Referendums

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Abstract:

The Greek form of democracy and the Roman Republic served as the ancient framework from which American democracy emerged. But, American democracy has not remained stagnant throughout America’s brief history. In fact, in many ways, American democracy has gradually moved toward more of a direct democracy and less of a representative republic.

The American regime has become increasingly a direct democracy through the use of initiatives and referendums. Representative democracy was created to best suit America, but direct democracy has a critical role in further legitimizing representation by increasing the voice of the people. Deliberation is a critical aspect of representation and I call into question how deliberation is used. Does transparency assist representatives in making more appropriate decisions or does transparency inhibit the crucial dialogue necessary for representation to be truly representative?
Table of Contents

Introduction: 1-2

Chapter 1) Republicanism vs. Democracy: A Brief History: 2-5

Chapter 2) Aristotelian Democracy and the Beginnings of Representation: 5-10

Chapter 3) John Locke and the Social Contract of Consent: 10-15

Chapter 4) The Fundamentals of the American Ideal of Representation: 15-22

Chapter 5) What is Representation According to Mill and Pitkin?: 23-33

Chapter 6) Direct Democracy Today and the Influence of Initiatives and Referendums: 34-42

Chapter 7) The Rise and Implications of Direct Democracy: 42-48

Chapter 8) My Experience with Politics: 48-54

Conclusion) 54-56

Works Cited) 57-59
"Oh, posterity, you will never know how much it cost us to preserve your freedom. I hope that you will make a good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in heaven that I ever took half the pains to preserve it."

– John Adams

Introduction:

The American Founding Fathers spent their lives crafting a government that would be unlike any other regime the world had ever seen. However, the American regime is not without its historic antecedents. The Greek form of democracy and the Roman Republic served as the ancient framework from which American democracy emerged. But, American democracy has not remained stagnant throughout America’s brief history. In fact, in many ways, American democracy has gradually moved toward more of a direct democracy and less of a representative republic.

Defining the terms democracy and republic through the lens of the American regime is a difficult task. Robert Dahl (1998) makes the argument that due to the lengthy history of each of these terms, they have “meant different things to different people at different times and places” (p. 3). In fact it was not until James Madison defined the two terms in *Federalist 10* that they were given distinct definitions (Dahl, 1998, p. 3).

The fact still remains—democracy in America is not the same today as it was at America’s founding. This essay will argue two main points: (1) The American regime has become increasingly a direct democracy through the use of initiatives and referendums; (2) representative democracy was created to best suit America, but direct democracy has a critical role in further legitimizing representation by increasing the voice of the people. After providing thorough definitions of direct democracy and representative democracy through the lens of Aristotle, Locke and the Founders, this essay will explain the original implementation of the American regime as a representative
democracy, and cite empirical examples of representation, deliberation and consent through the eyes of John Stuart Mill, Hanna Pitkin and Robert Dahl. A modern context will be outlined on what direct democracy entails and an example of direct democracies role in governing. The essay will then provide a case study of politics in Gardnerville, Nevada that addresses the idea of transparency and the effect of direct democracy.

Chapter 1: Republicanism vs. Democracy: A Brief History

After reading the core writings of the founding documents and their modern interpretations, I find it puzzling how the terms are often used interchangeably. I approached this discussion with the belief that the terms each have a specific definition and connotation, and it would appear that Robert Dahl (1998) held that assumption as well. Republic and democracy have varying definitions depending on the context in which they are used, and as Dahl (1998) mentions, the terms mean different things to different people at different times (p. 3). These two terms stem from Athenian Greece and the Roman Republic. These ancient regimes established in practice the meaning of each term, but history has altered how they function. Therefore, what they meant to our Founders is critical.

America is geographically vast, a fact the Founders took into account. For this reason the Roman ideal of a republic seemed to align better due to Rome’s vast geography and the concept of representation that Rome utilized. Greece’s democracy functioned in the polis, in which only a small group of people - roughly 40,000 adult males - in Athens could actually participate by voting and holding office. Because the
Founders thought that America would govern itself federally rather than by state government, a republic seemed to present a more viable proposition.

Thomas Jefferson readdressed this issue once he became President: “A government by representation is capable of extension over a greater surface of country than one of any other form” (Letters: 1816 Letter to Pierre Damual Dupont de Numours). Jefferson founded the Democratic Republican party that embodied many of the ideas discussed because that party signified the change in what democracy meant. The size of America has transformed the concept of a citizen’s role in government. But this situation poses a dilemma: how democratic can America be if the majority of the citizens do not have a direct role in government affairs like Athenian democracy? Modern technology has aided in bridging the gap of communication. The national political scene today is too vast for the purposes of this paper, but the role local systems play can still resemble the Founder’s ideals of a republic. Local entities of government embody the Founders vision for a national government. In order to better struggle with these terms the historical context of each term is necessary.

The etymology of each of the terms will help better identify the difference between the two emphasizing their roots and original language. The American idea of democracy stems from Greek, but was also used in France as democratie. The Greek dEmokratia is the most relevant to today’s definition. It is comprised of the Greek terms “demos” (people) and “kratos” (rule) - put simply, rule by the people. The most common definition across dictionaries is rule by the people with the absence of hereditary or arbitrary class distinctions (Oxford Dictionary: democracy). The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary further addresses the issue of governmental structure in which
there is directly or indirectly a system of representation. The idea of representation was not associated with democracy until the Middle-Ages of Europe and the American Revolution. For the Greek city-states, democracy was outlined by public participation in a few aspects of government. The people in Athens were able to participate in the assembly that elected a few key officials. Not all citizens were able to be involved on all levels of governing. For this reason, democracy was not a government that involved all citizens. Dahl (1998) mentions that the aristocratic elite of Athens often used the term democracy to show disdain for the “common people” (p. 155). Aristotle also viewed democracy as a government that would support political deliberation and a citizen’s right to freedom. Both these concepts (citizen and deliberation) will be addressed later in more detail.

The term republic does not have a very different history than democracy. Republic stems from Latin, which stems from many languages, but most notably Greek. As Athens was at its height, Rome made its appearance in the Italian peninsula. Therefore, “republic” is not necessarily a newer term than democracy, but democracy was made important before Rome became powerful. In Latin the term was *respublica*: “*res*” means thing or affair and “*publica*” means public. A direct translation is a public matter (Ayto: republic). Republic was also outlined by the French in the early 16th century. *Britannica Online Dictionary* and the *Oxford Dictionary* share similar definitions. The people have a say in how their government operates through elected representatives. The leaders are elected by the people and should answer to that group of people. Athenian democracy has aspects of representation, but the idea of representation became more familiar with Rome due to its size. Not all of Rome’s citizens could travel to Rome to participate in
government affairs; Athenians did not have that problem.

With these definitions now briefly outlined, I can begin to put these terms into a modern context amongst the authors who are most famous for defining them. It would be naïve for me to think that these terms do not overlap in many instances and for that reason the common conception of these terms is vague and unimportant to many. This is not to deny the fact that each term throughout history has been grounded in a very specific definition and connotation, but to demonstrate that as time has passed these terms have transformed as well. As we look at Aristotle, Locke, briefly the Federalist Papers, and modern scholars it will be shown that these terms have evolved. Ultimately I will address our definition of direct democracy today and how democracy has progressed to better incorporate the mass public.

Chapter 2: Aristotelian Democracy and the Beginnings of Representation

As an Athenian, Aristotle was aware that democracy would be the most likely regime of his day (Winthrop, 1978, p. 154). Aristotle is known for his criticism of mass participation as a part of democracy. His definition of democracy rested on the role of a citizen in this regime because of the number of people who could be added to the governing process. The term people is used here to highlight the fact that people are not necessarily citizens. A citizen is not a person who holds that title simply because of dwelling in a certain place or even by natural right. In order to be a citizen one must be active in the role of judging and ruling. Aristotle’s concern was that most people will not participate in governing and, therefore, are not fulfilling their duty as a so-called citizen.
This issue remains today; not everyone that lives in a democracy participates in their government.

According to Aristotle (1984), democracy “was the most moderate [government]…but the best of the bad sorts”, right above tyranny and oligarchy (p. 120). In *The Politics*, Aristotle outlined the positives and negatives of each kind of regime, and did not dismiss aspects of democracy, tyranny, or oligarchy. Much depended on the people each government served for and how long they would actually serve. To Aristotle (1984), government was a choice made by the people, but how the people were divided was of great concern to him. Each “regime should be studied” to determine what kind of government is appropriate for a society (p. 118). How a regime rose initially and how it might be preserved for future generations was a tough topic for Aristotle (Aristotle, 1984, p. 118). As Aristotle (1984) states, it is easy for a regime to last for two or three days, but not for a year, decade or centuries (p. 190). One way to make a regime last was to first have solid citizens and secondly to make sure those citizens deliberated with common goals.

According to Paul Nieuwenburg (2004), Aristotle saw the value of political deliberation in a regime. Aristotle “is particularly eloquent about the ways in which forms of public deliberation are integral to a person's moral education” (Nieuwenburg, 2004, p. 464). Not only does political deliberation lead to civic virtue, but also deliberation can lead to more thorough political decisions. Nieuwenburg (2004) points out that, “the deliberative capacity is responsible for the virtue of truthfulness, which should be an ingredient in any viable concept of a distinctively deliberative character” (p. 464). Therefore, truthfulness is a key concept when understanding Aristotle’s view of
democracy. Democracy can be an appropriate way of governing if the individuals that participate deliberate with high moral standards. The underlying theme of deliberation must be that the citizens’ opinions are rooted in sincerity for the common people. Common people would be everyone within the polis. For Aristotle, democracy should not be as concerned with actual governing, but rather the people who participate in that system. These participants must be citizens, but they acquire the skill of deliberation over time. Aristotle (1984) said, “whoever is entitled to participate in an office involving deliberation or decision is, we can now say, a citizen in this city” (p. 87). A city would be defined as a Greek polis.

The term polis is specific to Greek. The modern English term “state” is not analogous. Polis is a unique form of a city-state found throughout ancient Greece. It was a small, usually enclosed city that had approximately 10,000 people. Athens was much larger with a population of 100,000. The citizens directly participated in the politics of everyday life because it was an honor to participate, and because it was expected of a citizen. However, not all residents could participate in every area of the government. Only land-owning males that had completed military training were actually allowed to vote. This may have been the case, but Aristotle theorized about what Athens could be.

Aristotle’s Athens was greatly divided by the rich and poor. This division of classes was a concern to Aristotle especially with regard to democratic rule. If the majority rules, and what that majority dictates becomes the authority, then what happens to the other opinions? This is why, for Aristotle, the common good must always be upheld. This may be referred to as civic virtue. According to Winthrop’s (1978) interpretation of Aristotle, democracy is a regime that allows all factions to have a say (p. 160). Therefore, Athens
had problems when it came to participation because not everyone could participate equally.

In Book III of *The Politics*, Aristotle outlines his theory of what a citizen should be because without citizens things like the common good and skillful deliberation would be hard to come by. Winthrop (1978) explains Aristotle’s final definition of a citizen, "one who has the right (power) to share in the office of deliberating and judging with skill" (p.155). The key word in that summary is skill. Because democracy is grounded in citizen involvement and deliberation a citizen participates in political deliberation because he has the right to do so as a citizen. When a citizen has the right to be involved he must use that right to participate with care. When politics is handled irrationally then deliberation is not conducted in a moral manner with the common peoples’ ultimate well being in mind.

Aristotle uses examples of what some citizens may have that allow them the right to participate. One of those qualifications may be property or acquired wealth. Aristotle (1984) notes the disparities of wealth within communities, “in the case of the two notables there are differences based on wealth and the extent of their property…” (p. 121). The other two notables are the well off and the poor. John Locke, as well as Rousseau, vividly outlined the role private property played in civilization. This idea of property is directly related to the expanse of a regime. Aristotle was one of the first to note differences that can effect one’s inclination to be part of a regime and without property there could be tyranny. Tyranny is “when those have authority who do not possess a significant amount of property” and continue to rule (Aristotle, 1984, p. 96). The idea is that property makes rulers accountable because they have something to lose, while the poor have nothing to lose.
In Aristotle’s time, farming was what the majority of people did in order to make a living. Because most people farmed, they did not have much leisure time; therefore, they did not have a good deal of time to spend at an assembly partaking in governmental affairs (Aristotle, 1984, p. 186). Farming is done outside of the city and, therefore, removed from the assembly. Due to this concern of actual participation by individuals, he offered the idea of representation. He believed that if people turn their ideas over to other individuals who are well suited to rule then “the office will always be in the hands of the best persons” (Aristotle, 1984, p. 186).

Democracy rests on the fact that humans want to be free. Because men want to be free, they must find an appropriate way of governing themselves. In the case of democracy, “the multitude governs with a view of the common advantage” (Aristotle, 1984, p. 96). For participation to function correctly, citizens must not only think about their neighbor, but the common good of all. This is very hard to come by when men in politics are not citizens.

Winthrop (1978) explains that according to Aristotle's account of democracy, “the partisan of democracy demands political equality because he believes that the exercise of freedom is a worthy choice for man” (p. 155). The only way to exercise this freedom is through political deliberation. Citizens that own some form of property and have learned the skill of deliberation may participate in this democratic government as long as they constantly maintain the goal of the common good. When residents are not able to participate directly in politics, other citizens that have acquired the skills necessary to deliberate may represent them.

Ultimately Aristotle maintains his less than positive view of democracy because it
appears a successful democracy is difficult. One must ask, do I want to be a citizen? Do I want to take the time effort to learn to be a skillful debater? Do I have civic virtue? These are difficult questions to ask, but the citizens that can answer in the affirmative are the ones that should rule in a democracy. Because freedom is one of the pillars of democracy, each person within that democracy has the choice of whether to participate or note. Aristotle supports aspects of democracy even though it is difficult because he thinks that certain citizens will rise to the challenge of ruling and appropriately represent the other residents who do not own property or have the time to learn to govern.

Chapter Three: John Locke and the Social Contract of Consent

John Locke (1689) had a profound influence on the American regime with his “Two Treatises of Government”. This work was one of the texts widely read by the Founding Fathers due to Locke’s analysis of human nature and discussions of why individuals should leave their state of perfect freedom and enter into a political society. Locke (1689) considers the state in which all men are naturally in “and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions…” (p. 116). Locke’s (1689) thesis rests on the belief that people will leave the state of perfect freedom in order to protect their property (p. 178). However, the manner in which a people wish to construct a government is grounded in their reason and their consent to be governed. Locke observed the fact that all men are guided by one law of nature, and that law is reason. Men have the ability to construct a society that most benefits them. This idea rests on Aristotle’s view of
different types of regimes for different types of people and on the concept that the each
government should be unique to a people.

Locke was not naïve about the fact that man has never really been in a true state
of nature, but rather one perpetual form of government. Before there were specific
governments or governing bodies, there were commonwealths governed based upon
similar principles that were set up within that specific society. A commonwealth is not a
democracy or a republic, but rather a word that stems from the Latin word *civitas*. Not
easily translated into English, it resembles a small community that bands together to
protect their property (Locke, 1689, p.181). Within this community the idea that all men
are equal will remain the focus as well as the fact that “no one ought to harm another in
his life, health, liberty or possessions” (Locke, 1689, p.117). This notion of
commonwealth also justifies the idea that men will want to leave a state of perfect
freedom because our reason shows that protection is more important that absolute
freedom. At the same time, Locke does not dismiss the fact that freedom and equality can
still exist within in government that focuses on “life, health, liberty and possessions”.

Laws protect liberty and these laws must be established by a legislature or
supreme power and “promulgated and known to the people…to prevent or redress foreign
injuries and secure the community from…invasion” (Locke, 1689, p.181). For Locke
(1689) the role of any government is simple: protect man’s freedom and the property that
“God hath… given to man in common” (p. 127). Locke (1689) could not have been more
clear, “and all this (what is mentioned above) to be directed to no other end, but the
peace, safety, and public good of the people” (p. 181). Law should be established through
the one law of nature -- reason -- to instill public safety and that those laws should not
impede one’s fundamental liberties; life, property and security against other men (Locke, 1689, p.157).

What do we know is reasonable? Why be concerned with the state of nature or the definition of man-made terms? What is “reasonable” to Locke may not be reasonable for Plato, Marx, or Nietzsche, and the term reasonable is constantly open for interpretation, and dependent on multiple factors. For the purposes of this argument, Locke’s assumption of what is reasonable is grounded in human reason. This ability to reason constantly leads man to want to protect his property, his freedom, and his ability to conduct war if necessary. Locke (1689) uses violence in this context: “…it being reasonable and just I should have a right to destroy that which threatens me with destruction” (p. 122). Locke assumes that all human beings have the capacity to reason and because of this capacity all men will consistently use their reason to good. “Good” is a word open for discussion, but let us call on the most common definition; actions or decisions that are made that attempt not to harm another individual or group of people.

All of what has been said about reason, property, and liberty rests on the will of the people to consent to some idea of justice. This idea of justice must be established by men in some form of a political society (Locke, 1689, p.122). Hobbes was an English philosopher in the 17th century, who wrote before Locke, another English philosopher in the later part of the 17th century, believed that consent comes through contract, but Locke (1689) believed that consent to any external power must be grounded in reason and law: “…Reason being plain and on our side, that men are naturally free, (and) that governments of the world, that were begun in peace, had the beginning laid on that foundation, and were made by the consent of the people; there can be little room for
doubt, either where the right is, or what has been the opinion or practice of mankind…” (p.167). Locke was outlining the fundamental notion of America: the government can only rule so long as the people consent. In order for a regime to endure, many forms of government must be discussed before one can be chosen as its foundation. Once established, no regime should be led by one sector of society -- not by one man, or by the vast majority of citizens. A government must be one of mixed ideals.

Locke advised against aspects of democracy because he did not think that all men could ever come to the same conclusion, no matter how reasonable man may be. His example is that pure consent is impossible; “…such a consent is next to impossible to ever be had…[and this] will necessarily keep many away from the public assembly” (Locke, 1689, p.164). Locke has faith in mankind to govern themselves because of our self interest but also knows that it is impossible for a political community to reach united consensus. He also does not neglect their right to have a say in what takes place. Man “puts himself under an obligation to everyone of that society…” to be reasonable and come to decisions that will better all men in that society (Locke, 1689, p.164). The ultimate decision of any society that calls on its members’ opinions must uphold the opinion of the majority. Due to this inability to have 100% consent man must find a political system that can facilitate various opinions and come to the most “reasonable” conclusion. This political system is a legislature.

The power of government can be no more powerful “than those persons had in a state of nature before they entered into society…for nobody can transfer to another more power than he has in himself…” (Locke, 1689, p.183). Therefore, a legislature must not be arbitrary about the opinions it hears. A legislator must rule by the law of nature, what
is “reasonable”. No law can be or should be crafted that sets out to destroy the preservation of liberty or property. Other than those rules, government must uphold the majority opinions within that government structure.

A legislature would not function properly through constant direct influence of all people. For Locke there can only be one supreme power. The people can decide what that power is, but for Locke the legislative entity should hold the ultimate power to make law. Every other branch must be subordinate, if they exist (Locke, 1689, p.191). Therefore, with public support the people decide who will uphold the law of nature, craft laws, while also keeping the citizens best interest at heart.

Locke might be more famous for his idea that people actually have the right to “remove or alter” the legislature (it may be any power for that matter) if that power becomes destructive of its original means. “Whenever anyone shall go about to bring them into such a slavish condition, they will always have a right to preserve what they have not a power to part with; and to rid themselves of those invade this fundamental, scared, and unalterable law of self-preservation”; because that is the very foundation on which people left the state of nature (Locke, 1689, p.191). No other political theorist up to this point outlined a philosophy in which the people could dissolve a regime which undermined the law of nature and the fundamental right to property and liberty.

At this point, it should be noted that Aristotle and Locke shared the similar idea of popular involvement. Neither philosopher neglected the people’s right to participate, but rather thought that their influence should be hindered in some areas because the people were not educated enough to make policy decisions. This is not to say that they did not think people knew what they wanted, but rather those passions could lead to negative
ends if not properly controlled. Therefore, representation helps mediate the people’s desires and passions with the use of reason. For Locke, the legislature would be a body crafted by the people, but the legislature would represent those who supported them.

Chapter Four: The Fundamentals of the American Ideal of Representation

The Founding Fathers established their own form of government embodying various aspects of numerous regimes but chose to call America a republic because of the factor of representation. Madison, in *The Federalist 51*, outlined American republicanism in one context, by stating that elected officials would be of “enlightened views and virtuous sentiments”. Those elected to represent would do so in a variety of ways. Locke illustrated that the legislature is one of the most important aspects of any democratic regime. Not only should the people be involved through representation, but also power should reside in the hands of the highly qualified who will uphold the laws created. America would not be a monarchy, aristocracy, tyranny, or oligarchy. America would assume the title of republic because of representation, and this is made clear through the correspondence of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and George Washington. I am not suggesting at this point that republicanism is vastly different from a democracy, but rather the connotation of the words meant something specific to the Founders. For their various reasons, it was thought that representation would be more effective in governing a large nation.

Vetterli and Bryner (1987) use the writings of the Founding Fathers, such as *The Federalist Papers*, in their book *In Search of The Republic* to demonstrate the idea of
virtue and how it would justify the concept of representation. Madison and Hamilton believed that mankind has a “dual nature of both good and corruption”, but corruption was the way most men leaned (Vetterli and Bryner, 1987, p.167). It is for this specific reason that government exists. According to Hamilton, man must be constrained in some respects; government would be that constraint (Vetterli and Bryner, 1987, p. 168). On the other hand, Jefferson had a great deal of faith in the population and wanted to make sure that the people would have a say in how they were constrained. The Founders considered the dilemma of man’s character. The fact was that man is driven by greed, avarice, self-love and power. The Founders considered this a dilemma because they would have to create a government that would not impede liberty but would control man’s desire of greed, avarice, self-love and power. How does one group of men account for the various types of human dispositions? Man brings a plethora of variables to the table of government and the ones that appear to be the most problematic are greed, avarice, self-love and power. While these can be positives in certain scenarios, they pose specific problems for a government.

There is no easy answer, but the situation remains a dilemma because a government must be created that does not impede those passions, and also one that harnesses the will to participate. As Madison so eloquently put in *Federalist 51*, “If men were angels, then government would not be needed”. Government is necessary to secure the liberties of man and protect individuals’ property through a network of checks and balances in the hopes that passion would be guided by reason and deliberation not man’s passions.
Vetterli and Bryner (1987) outline the foundation of the American regime through the lens of civic virtue because the goal of the Founders was to harness that virtue within each citizen. Virtue is desirable because it is guided by reason more than passion. They assert that our constitutional structure, separation of powers, federalism and enumerated powers “cannot be understood without recognizing the expectation of public virtue on which they were built” (Vetterli and Bryner, 1987, p. 162). Because the Founders looked to the past they once again called on the Greeks for answers about public virtue.

The Greeks did not overlook the human characteristics that led man to be governed and how they would act if constrained by a government. America was not the first to determine that man’s nature was beholden to certain flawed characteristics. Like the Greeks, the Founders believed that man’s passions would lead to factions; groups of people that would band together for a specific cause. The problem posed at this point is that in order for a republic to exist or any form of democracy the people must participate. But how the people participate is vital to a government’s success. If their participation is guided by passion then factions can be harmful, but if the factions are guided by virtue then they can be controlled.

So what exactly is a faction? A faction is not necessarily a group beholden to disruption and disintegration, but it can nonetheless “signify a seditious political group” with certain “economic and class overtones” (Vetterli and Bryner, 1987, p. 163). The size of such a faction depends on a number of variables, but the main concern is what happens when a faction becomes a majority. This is one of the reasons that Aristotle did not appreciate a democracy as much as a “mixed system” that would embody various ideas from each form of government. A republic could offer an equilibrium to this dilemma by
establishing representatives rather than simple direct involvement in the process of government. Faction stems from the Latin word *factio*. *Factio* was rarely used in its literal form “making”. This word was applied to English as faction from the classical use of the word as a “group of people acting together” (Ayto 1990: Fashion). The term is also most similar to the word *fashion* with its connotation of “making, forming or shaping”. Even though the word in English stems from Latin, the Greeks were still aware of what a faction was and its effects (Vetterli and Bryner, 1987, p. 163). From such a definition it would be difficult to deduce that factions are violent or evil. They are simply groups of people who come together for a common cause. The problem arises when a faction becomes destructive of the norms or supposedly embodies the “will of the people”.

William Finer (1971) suggests that one of the qualifications of democracy is that it be pluralistic (p. 64). With this concept established a government does not have to set out to rule in the interest of any one group, but rather the common interest of all. This is best achieved through a representative system with a legislator and checks and balances. In this scenario all points are considered and the judgment of the few is not swayed by the passions of the many. When the Ancient Greeks envisioned democracy they were less interested in pluralism and more interested in majority rule. The Founders accepted this notion of pluralism through Madison’s definition of faction: “A number of citizens whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion…” (Vetterli and Bryner, 1987, p. 166). It was obvious that Madison did not believe a faction had to be a majority to be harmful. However, if a faction was the true majority there would be no force in power to stop it.
This is why aspects of a representative regime must have pluralistic qualities in order to represent all people. This is where a legislature’s role becomes imperative.

A legislative branch is necessary for a republican form of government because representatives act based upon the opinions of their constituents. Even if the majority of representatives are still proportional and there are a few who will speak on behalf of the minority then representation is still occurring. According to Finer (1971) a liberal-democracy, a democracy that supports all ideas equally, implies that the minorities have the chance to become a majority; therefore the government should facilitate these ideals in a liberal-democracy, and the people should be open to ideas of change. These ideas of change should not be rooted in passion, but virtue and the common good.

Factions are the making, shaping, and implementing of ideas that specific groups of people believe in. Factions are important to all regimes because it means that people are involved in how they are governed. For the Founders and the Greeks alike, factions could be problematic if they are solely guided by man’s corruption, his self-love, greed and avarice. The solution to the Founders was a Lockeian view of a legislature.

Locke was not an avid supporter of democracy nor did he mention a republic. His philosophy and structure was guided by the legislature which is: “The act of the majority passes for the act of the whole, and of course determines, as having by the law of nature and reason, the power of the whole” (Locke, 1689, p. 164). Therefore, factions are not the main concern of Locke because the majority should always speak for the whole. Locke’s concern was whether or not man will rule with reason, the law of nature Locke deems most important in his discussion of human nature. Reason also shows that the majority will rule in many cases if there is not another power to counter that ideal from time to
time. If the people are to rule based upon majority rules, then that majority “should” make choices based on reason. However, the Founders knew that men are greedy and solely self-interested and that reason would not always be their guiding light.

For Locke, government was something that was not set in stone. It could be and should be altered depending on the people in which it will govern. A political society is nothing more than the consent of “any number of free men, capable of a majority to unite and incorporate into such a society” (Locke, 1689, p. 165). Even though Locke makes this assumption, he himself finds problems with it. First, there are no instances throughout history of independent and equal men coming together to set up a government. The second is that no man has ever been born into a situation in which no government was established (Vetterli and Bryner 165). For these two reasons it is almost impossible to establish a new government in which people will come together for a common cause that embodies the will of the majority. This of course is before America.

Madison thought factions could inhibit the success of America if not properly controlled. However, he did see them as a necessary part of a republic because of man’s passion and inability to be “an angel”. Man has his natural faults. However, man can be good. The Founders saw government as necessary. According to Hamilton government was needed “because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint” (Vetterli and Bryner, 1987, p. 168). Government would be that constraint. Hamilton was more in favor federalism than Jefferson. For this reason Hamilton saw a strong federal government as the answer to the quandary of human nature. According to Hamilton, man’s evil nature has been experienced through the ages, and to think otherwise was just not an option at that point in history.
Madison is the most eloquent at expanding on this idea of factions and representation. “You must first enable to the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself” (Rossiter, 2003, p. 319). However, each power within the government cannot have an “equal power of self-defense” (Rossiter, 2003, p. 319). This brings us back again to the legislature. “In republican government, the legislative authority necessarily predominates” (Rossiter, 2003, p. 319). For this reason the government must be broken up internally with different principles in mind. Because citizens have different interests and are separated by class the legislature must reflect this discrepancy. A republican government is reliant on the people to participate for this balance of power to be achieved.

Jefferson had more faith in mankind than Hamilton. He believed that all men should be able to rule over themselves either directly or indirectly. No matter what, the people should be involved in the process of governing. Hence the first distinctions of the America Founders, Democratic Republicans vs. Federalists. The dilemma facing each entity was how to establish a balance that would favor a strong central government or one that advocated for more involvement from the people. It could be concluded that these were the first factions of the American experiment.

However, before these two parties arose, Madison made a very compelling argument as to why factions could be mitigated within the American republic. To Madison, factions were a “dangerous vice” that had destroyed previous popular regimes because there were not enough people with separate interests in that society. According to Madison, “that the larger the society, provided it lie within a practicable sphere, the more duly capable it will be of self-government” (Rossiter, 2003, p. 322). The more ideas the
better because the ultimate goal of every government is justice, and until justice is completely obtained, the more ideas and more opinions that a government has on how to reach that end, the better.

“There are two methods of curing the mischiefs of factions: the one, by removing its causes, the other, by controlling its effects” (Rossiter: Federalist 10). Madison advocates for option two, controlling its effects. What allows factions to exist is liberty. Liberty could not be extinguished; it was and is the foundation to America. The other method would be giving citizens the same opinions and the same passions. That is nearly impossible in a democracy or a republic. Therefore, as long as factions can be controlled and the weaker individual is secure from violence the uncertainty that factions establish keeps government in check and the people constantly battling for the majority opinion.

We have now come to the point where democracy and republicanism have been properly outlined through a historical lens with the filter of the Founder’s opinions. Not only did America form a unique government, but the Founders had to fight for the majorities’ support. This battle for representation forced each opinion to eloquently outline their reasoning and this has given us a great insight into what they thought of representation. There is far too much information to cover here, but what should be taken away is that there was volatility within the Founders circle of what the role of the people should play in governing. Ultimately the people have a say in who will represent them and the direction the government should take on specific issues. As history transpired, every citizen received the right to vote and with the implication of technology and media, the individual’s role in government has greatly increased. We will examine that impact in chapter six.
Chapter Five: What is Representation According to Mill and Pitkin?

“The meaning of representative government is, that the whole people, or some numerous portion of them, exercise through deputies periodically elected by themselves, the ultimate controlling power, which, in every constitution, must reside somewhere” (p. 34-35).

~John Stuart Mill (1859)

In 1859 John Stuart Mill outlined his views of representative government by discussing the role of deliberation in a representative system of governing. This concept of deliberation is just one factor in a sequence of a few key events. Before any kind of representation can be established and enacted deliberation must take place amongst the majority of people. Once that deliberation has reached a conclusion then the majority will consent to the said conclusion. Only after the people have deliberated and consented can any form of obedience be expected by the people within a representative government. Mill examines the ideal of representation in the context of English 19th century liberalism and his ideas of representation will be later reviewed by the 20th century academic Hanna Pitkin.

Hanna Pitkin (1976) discusses how representation can be a number of things not simply an ideal. She takes a similar approach as Mill by delineating how representation ultimately rests on deliberation but her context is the 20th century through the lens of living in the American system of representation and checks and balances. She will also identify Hobbes’ thoughts of representation and his brief analysis to help highlight how vital obedience is to a ruling authority. Deliberation is essential to the process of democracy, but at some point the people must concede and consent to the conclusions the representatives have made. Mill’s 19th century approach is contrasted by Pitkin’s 20th century viewpoint.
Mill (1859) begins his analysis by discussing representative government: “It is above all necessary to keep in view the distinction between its idea or essence, and the particular forms in which the idea has been clothed by accidental historical developments, or by the notions current at some particular time” (p. 34). Representation must be outlined in different contexts for it to make sense to a generation. Mill’s definitions are predicated on historical ideas, but his philosophy of representation is an ideal. He is able to use the historical developments of American government to help expand upon what representation actually is in America compared to what it should be.

America established a form of representation, but how representative is it today? In order to properly address this question we must have an example of perfection to compare to actuality. The America Constitution established branches of government through checks and balances that would function based on elections of representatives. For Mill (1859) that is the first foundation to establishing a solid base of representatives: “A representative constitution is a means of bringing the general standard of intelligence and honesty existing in the community, and the individual intellect and virtue of its wisest members, more directly to bear upon the government and investing them with greater influence in it, that they would in general have under any other mode of organization” (p. 13). Mill recognized that society has a “standard of intelligence” and that intelligence will elect the “wisest member” to rule. Therefore, how a society is organized depends on whom they elect and how the elected officials ideals embody that “standard of intelligence”. Mill also makes the assumption that representatives will be the best and the brightest. However, representation assumes that the people will have a large pool of people to select from in order to elect the “best”. Therefore, the more people to
choose from the better the end result. It could easily be shown over the course of
governments that many rulers have not had faith in the common people. The thought has
always been that the best and the brightest should rule. The “wisest members” are the
most fit to rule and represent the ideas of the people, but that does not mean they wish to
rule. There does not seem to be anything wrong with this idea of electing the best and the
brightest, but that how often that happens is up for debate. The ideal remains that society
will elect the most qualified citizen to hold office.

In the beginning of the American experiment the people only had a choice in
relation to their local governments. There were not many highly educated individuals
during the revolutionary period. The people knew who the educated were and those
educated individuals felt the pressure and responsibility to be involved in governing. As
much as there was pressure for those few to lead, they would not be able to do so without
the support of the public. This is related to the concept of civic virtue and that there is a
certain amount of responsibility a citizen has to participate in some capacity. The
Founding Fathers were the educated few who took on the task of crafting a new
government. Their individual strengths and character were what allowed for the
differences in how our government was crafted.

A representative government assumes that citizens are willing to obey those they
elect. For Mill governments can be judged. “A government is to be judged by its actions
upon men…it’s tendency to improve or deteriorate the people themselves, …and the work
it performs for them (citizens)” (Mill, 1859, p. 14). The assumption must be then made
that if a government attains such ends then there would be no need for intervention from
the citizens because representatives are always true to their constituents. Every few years
or so the people will elect a new representative and they will then return to their lives and let the representatives rule. If their life remains good, they will re-elect that individual; if it is worse, they will elect someone else.

The ideal at this point is that all people should a have a stake in the process of governing. Mill (1859) states, that “it is evident, that the only government which can fully satisfy all the exigencies of the social state is one in which the whole people participate” (p. 26). He follows this statement up with the fact that even the “smallest public function is useful” to government (Mill, 1859, p. 26). Representation does not mean that the democratic ideals of direct involvement should not apply, but rather the ultimate decisions cannot be made by all citizens. Decisions can be made by all citizens, but rarely will all the people under a government agree on a single issue. Decisions have to be made through deliberation and consent of the majority. Decisions have to be made for the sake of efficiency by those that are elected to rule. People put someone in charge to make the tough choices by weighing all options. Ultimately deliberation ends and consent begins.

Mill (1859) acknowledges that direct participation cannot exceed a small town; therefore the “ideal type of a perfect government must be representative” (p. 28). Aristotle knew that such participation would not function properly in large arenas, and Thomas Jefferson acknowledged that such a democracy is an aspect of a republic “but impracticable beyond the limits of a town” (1816, Letter to Isaac H. Tiffany). Mill is using other thinkers to highlight what history has told us about representation. Due to the fact that man is selfish and wants to have control over his life, he should have access to the government. Because not everyone can participate on a large political stage,
representation still allows for involvement on some level. This still rests on the notion that the people are willing to obey such a government (Mill, 1859, p. 28).

So what does representing the people really entail? “There is a radical distinction between controlling the business of government, and actually doing it” according to Mill (Mill, 1859, p. 36). It might be possible for one group or person to control everything, but one person, or group of people cannot do everything. Therefore, bodies should control government not individuals. This relates to the notion of checks and balances in which, not only do individuals have a say, but also entire bodies check on each other to facilitate a consensus. As Mill (1859) once again clearly states, “what can be done better by a body than by any individual, is deliberation” (p. 36). Representatives rely on deliberation and the more opinions the better because it allows them to form more objective opinions. This is also similar to the notion of factions; the more factions there are the better. But in this case, when people deliberate, Mill suggests their opinions will better align. This is the stage where the people need to participate. The people control the actions of the representatives by employing them, but the actual fulfillment of ideas is reserved for the elected officials.

Representation exists to uphold the majority’s suggestions, but on very few occasions does the entire population agree. Therefore, who does the representative support? This issue was a concern to the democratic rule in Greece, Rome, and America; “is the government of the whole people by the whole people,” this according to Mill (Mill, 1859, p. 53). There is a great deal of confusion surrounding the terms democracy and republic if the terms are not clearly defined, yet Mill offers another distinction. Representation still functions based upon the majority. Even in a “representative body
actually deliberating, the minority must of course be overruled, and in an equal
democracy…the majority…will out vote and prevail over the minority…” (Mill, 1859, p. 53). The concern here is not about the majority, but the minority. For Aristotle, Locke
and most importantly Madison if the majority consistently wins, which they do in a
representative democracy, then the minority has little say in the outcome. Mill (1859)
asks, “but does it follow that the minority should have no representatives at all? (p. 53) In
equal government the majority will have the majority of representatives, but the minority
will still have representatives; therefore, the minority will always have a say in the final
outcome. This is the foundation of America and its ideal of representation; the minority
needs a voice.

About one hundred years later, Hanna Pitkin readdressed the issue of
representation. She begins her critique with the suggestion that her book is “about an
idea, a concept, a word” (Pitkin, 1976, p. 1). Representation to Pitkin was not an easily
observable character to government because it was not concrete. Pitkin (1976) states,
“who can capture an instance of representation?” (p. 1) Representation means a number
of things and depending on the people, place, and time representation has meant vastly
different things. Democracy or republicanism do not solely hold the title of
representation. A dictator, monarch or aristocracy could represent the people. Pitkin’s
(1976) analysis of representation rests on the this statement: “representation is more than
simply pleasing the so called represented (p. 228).

Before people craft a government they have to be willing to give up particular
freedoms. Mill discussed what representation would be like without obedience to the
laws enacted by the representatives. Because certain freedoms have to be sacrificed in
any government this idea is directly related to the idea of consent because without consent civil disobedience can ensue. When particular freedoms are sacrificed for safety, people may disregard the law. Pitkin (1976) echoes these two ideas: “a representative government could be distinguished from other forms, under such a notion, by the high degree of obedience, consent or support it received from its subjects” (p. 228). Consent and obedience are two signs that representation is actually taking place. These are only two of the signs. If these were the only two signs then a monarch, dictator, or aristocracy could supposedly represent the people. Pitkin’s role in outlining representation is to show that words mean many things in many various contexts, and if an author does not properly outline what they mean, confusion will arise. For the purposes of this paper representation will be used in regards to a legislature on a national stage and later redefined for local government in Douglas County.

At this point a legislator would be representative if he/she was “acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them. The representative must act independently; his actions must involve discretion and judgment, he must be the one that acts” (Pitkin, 1976, p. 202). This is not unique to democracy and that is why there is a sequence of events that must transpire. This is a brief outline of what one definition of representation is and what must be accomplished for “representation” to exist. Someone who has been elected by the people must make a decision; he or she must act! How that decision is reached can often be a quandary.

Pitkin (1976) acknowledges that if citizens need “scientific true answers” then representation is impossible (p. 212). It is not easy to please everyone and scientific answers are usually not available because of the human component of deliberation.
Representation also rests on the assumption that somewhere in society there is an interest in politics. This interest leads to educated decisions in which a deliberative process can be engaged in, and those interested can turn out results. Representation is a judgment made by citizens and ultimately by the representatives that are elected. As Mill (1859) noted, a deliberative body is indispensable to a group of representatives (p. 36).

Representation can be examined in many contexts, and for the purposes of this paper, I have opted to look at the legislator. However, even this raises issues of who is supposed to be represented. In America, our Founders envisioned a House of Representatives and Senate that would be guided by unique constituents, and therefore, unique issues. Each representative would have to not only represent the United States but his or her own district and state. What group is that representative supposed to represent? Pitkin notes that these issues are not mutually exclusive and depending on the scenario will have to make a decision based upon who is the most important entity to represent. Let us not overlook the common threads that run through America and the aspects of society that all citizens wish to achieve. In other words, people have universal ideas about the role of America, but on a smaller stage their wills differ. When the dilemma of who to represent arises, deliberation should set the stage for what is most important. The representative should then follow that end, or that is at least one explanation. This raises another concern, and that is: is the representative’s position and conscience up to the obligation of representing to the best of his ability?

Pitkin explains what actual representatives have said about their decisions. One explanation for an unpopular decision was that the representative she referenced knew information the public did not have access to. Therefore, the representative made the best
decision based upon the most appropriate intelligence arguing that people could not understand his decision because they did not have access to the same information. The point still remains, if a legislator has many conflicting interests, and just because he does not make a decision that suits everyone, does that mean he is not representative of the people?

Representation in the contemporary viewpoint is guided by an “institutionalized arrangement” that guides how a legislator operates (Pitkin, 1976, p. 221). Our conventions about representation should not be ignored but qualified by what representation means in a given context. Representation is not a private affair of face-to-face meetings; therefore, “Political representation is primarily a public, institutionalized arrangement involving many people and groups, and operating in the complex ways of large-scale social arrangements” (Pitkin, 1976, p. 221). As the institution and the population have grown, the ratio of representatives to people has increased. This is not a negative aspect of representation, but rather a fact that representation depends on voter participation and the more people that speak their mind the more representative an elected official should be. That is the assumption.

Pitkin looks to Thomas Hobbes and his philosophy because she calls on his assessment of representation often. Hobbes is considered the first modern political scientist due to his in-depth look at man and our political nature. For Hobbes, representation is the foundation of his theory of a covenant. Hobbes notes that in order for a governing body or individual to rule with authority that power must establish a covenant with the people. The concept of representation rests on the philosophy that through the multitude one person or group of people will be given the authority of the
masses in order to rule. According to Hobbes (1651), “a multitude of men, are made one person, when they are by one man, or one person, represented; so that it be done with the consent of everyone of that multitude in particular” (p. 220).

Representation is, therefore, not a separation from the people but rather a unity of differing opinions that still hold authority, but the masses’ authority is transferred to one person through a covenant that should make the proper decisions. The multitude is no one, but many, therefore, cannot and should not be regarded as one, but rather many authors of the representatives decisions. Once the covenant has been made the people should not limit a representative’s authority. “When they [the people] limit him in what and how far he shall represent them, none of them oweth more than they gave him commission to act” (Hobbes, 1651, p. 221). A representative should not have more or less authority than the people are willing to give, but Hobbes is clear that his authority should not be altered because the people might disagree with a decision and if the decision effects their livelihood the issue of civil disobedience may arise.

Hobbes’s outline of representation is brief, but a critical piece of the puzzle. Not only is he the first to discuss such a point, but his ideas are also echoed by Locke and Mill in similar fashions. By this I mean Locke acknowledged that representation is based on consent while Mill decides that deliberation amongst the population is critical to advising representatives. Hobbes is not afraid of dissent or even factions in a democracy. He accounts for varying opinions, and states that one power should have the authority to overturn other affirmative voices because the single authority can consider all opinions and make the “best” decision. This extinguishes diversity and harms representation because it silences dissent.
Pitkin zeros in on a final point that is necessary for our contemporary view of representation. I have already made reference to the importance of consent and a covenant when it comes to governing. However, once a representative has been given the authority of the people he then has a responsibility to the people to carry out their will. Due to the fact that representation today encompasses the legislative institution, a representative has many ideals to represent. This responsibility is two-fold. Representation then is “a form of government whereby the governed can be said to be responsible for their governor’s actions” just as much as the governor is responsible for carrying out the will of the governed (Pitkin, 1976, p. 44). The process of representation is complex and involves the interaction of many differing forces, but at its core the “representative system must look after the public interest and be responsive to public opinions;” however, the public interest can be quelled if justified by public opinion (Pitkin, 1976, p. 234). There will always be caveats to representation and that is why so many minds have struggled with a concept that is believed to be understood and fairly simple. Pitkin (1976) concludes “there are many ways in which a government may be said to represent, but not all of them correspond to the idea of a representative government” (p. 228). For this reason each idea that needs to be discussed needs a unique lens in which to view that specific form of representation. As long as consent is given to an individual, some form of representation will exist. However, its authority and responsibility will differ as well as how representative that authority is of the people’s opinions.
Chapter Six: Direct Democracy Today and the Influence of Initiatives and Referendums

American democracy has grown to embody the change that has been outlined by the previous thinkers. Many of the terms considered in this essay have a strong foundation in the conception of this country, but today these terms have been examined in a new light and offer a clearer explanation of what the people desire from their government. Abraham Lincoln stated that America is actually a “democracy in a republic”, and I take this to mean that all people should have their voice heard by representatives if those people are willing to speak up.

Our democracy has seen changes in how deliberation and consent function. Deliberation is not solely conducted by town hall meetings and walking door to door with a petition. America today has seen tremendous growth in the use of alternative methods of deliberation. We know that deliberation is key to representation, but in the modern era, how can a society better deliberate? The public has harnessed the use of initiatives and referendums. Direct democracy rests on the fact that people, regardless of the time period, wish to have a more influential voice upon the individuals that actually make policy.

This discussion of direct democracy is grounded by citizens that engage in direct democracy because they do not trust their representatives or they have an idea that they want heard. That is one explanation. This fact is shown in Bowler, Donovan and Karp’s (2007) article Enraged or Engaged: Preferences for direct citizen participation in affluent democracies. This article, along with others, will help guide the discussion to the culmination of American democracy today and why citizens feel that direct democracy
will actually help facilitate more effective representation through more direct methods of participation like ballot initiatives and referendums.

Initiatives are petitions that can be signed by a specific number of people to force a vote on a proposed policy. Initiatives are established on the ground that the minority may have a say in unpopular policies. Referendums are ballot questions that require a direct vote by the citizenry. These can be introduced by a legislator or the public through the help of a representative. Majority wins in the case of referendums (Bowler et al., 2007, p. 351).

Robert Dahl (1998) provided a guidebook to democracy outlining terms, ideas, individuals and the overall history of democracy. I began this paper by outlining the differences in terms and the importance of recognizing the complexity of certain terms due to the context each term has depending on the time and place. That is true of direct democracy as well. Dahl suggests that one of the main criterion for any democracy is not simply voting or elections, but the freedom of expression throughout the process. This aspect of freedom is fundamental in order for a citizen to participate in political life. Dahl (1998) poses the question: “how can citizens make their views known and persuade their fellow citizens and representatives…unless they can express themselves freely…” (p. 96). Without this freedom, that is unalienable within the American regime, democracy would not be possible in the capacity we have come to know it by, nor would direct democracy be a topic of discussion today. The important aspect of Dahl’s quote is representation relies on freedom of expression. Representatives need to be guided by the will of the people. Therefore, without our First Amendment, democracy and
representation would not be fully understood as many of the first democracies and republics experienced. This expression is most notably felt through elections.

Democracy, as William Riker (1982) defines it in *Liberalism Against Democracy*, rests on the population’s ability to vote. However, voting does not mean that a person’s voice has properly been heard or heeded: “thus one can say that democracy implies voting but voting does not imply democracy” (Riker, 1982, p. 5). The quandary of voting has to do with choices. If citizens do not have the ability to make an appropriate choice for a representative they, in turn, search for other avenues in which to make their voice heard. Public opinion raises the question: is the growing public dissatisfied with the current system of representation? Dalton, Burklin and Drummond (2001) in their article *Public opinion and direct democracy* argue that more people are saying “yes”, they are dissatisfied with current representative democracy because their voice is not being heard by their representatives. Due to the fact that this concern has been raised, individuals are taking a more direct role in politics through the use of initiatives and referendums.

Bowler et al. (2007) have recently found information based on a survey done by the International Social Survey Program that addressed citizens’ opinions of direct democracy. The question was asked to all nations they surveyed; therefore, (NATION) just depends upon which nation they were asking the question: “Thinking now about politics in [NATION] to what extent do you agree or disagree that referendums are a good way to decide important political questions?” (Bowler et al., 2007, p. 352). It found that 70% of American respondents would support a proposal for a national initiative and referendum process. Similar evidence was found by Dalton et al. (2001) by using the Eurobarometer in Europe. The Founders intended to have public involvement by all
citizens, but representatives would carry out their will. The Founders wanted to have the public’s voice prevalent in the political process. Their concern was whether or not the people should be involved, but how they would be able to be involved in a large republic such as America. As Thomas Jefferson stated, “A democracy is the only pure republic, but impracticable beyond the limits of a town” (*Thomas Jefferson to Isaac Tiffany 1816*). Thomas Jefferson was a large supporter of the public and its ability to be involved in the political process, but also knew that representation was the only logical way to have a democracy work over a large geographic area. Therefore, in a modern context, people are finding out that initiatives and referendums are effective ways to have their voice freely expressed that will influence a representative directly.

Representation and direct democracy can work together to benefit each other and this has been shown over time. The underlying theme is that “direct democracy is an institutional tool that could be used to force legislatures to better respond to mass preferences for policies (Johnson, 1944, p. 291). This quote came from 1944. Direct democracy is not new to America nor the world. Athens used direct democracy within their polis. In a recent article by John G. Matsusaka (2005) *Direct democracy works* he shows that direct democracy in America stems from South Dakota that adopted initiatives and referendums in 1898. As of, 2004, twenty-four other states have adopted these tools of direct democracy (Matsusaka, 2005, p. 189). Direct democracy has been in America for over 100 years. It was also previously mentioned that over 70% of the Americans support some form of initiative and referendums. The question remains: does direct democracy facilitate participation and a more representative government?
Citizens in the modern representative world have conceded much of their authority to multiple entities within the governmental system. Citizens delegate authority not only to elected representatives but administrators, bureaucratic civil servants, judges, and even international organizations (Dahl, 1998, p. 113). This issue has caused many citizens to become concerned about elite bargaining in which the individual citizen is no longer involved in any process except electing a representative that has power over the all above mentioned. This was one of the concerns that the respondents had in Bowler et al. (2007) survey. This has given rise to an increase in the role of political parties and interest groups (Dahl, 1998, p. 185). These two groups have made information more available and easier to decipher, thus making political participation “more easily attainable” due to the fact that individuals can receive information from these sources (Dahl, 1998, p. 185). It would be difficult to make the case that citizens in America consented or established a covenant with the American regime, so many people may be upset with the amount of authority they have to give up in a representative democracy.

Not everyone can directly participate in a representative democracy without the help of other outlets. Even if a representative wanted to spend just ten minutes with each of his or her constituents, they would have no time for anything else. If a representative had only ten thousand constituents that representative would spend 208 eight-hour days with their constituents (Dahl, 1998, p. 107). When most representatives today have about 400,000 constituents, it would take them almost ten years to meet with all of them. That is not possible. So to sum up this issue, Dahl (1998) proposes the following: “The law of time and numbers: The more citizens a democratic unit contains, the less that citizens can participate directly in government decision and the more they must delegate authority to
others” (p. 109). The implications of this statement have given rise the era of direct democracy because representatives simply do not have the time to handle all the concerns of the citizens.

Dahl (1998) had a vision that one day the size of the territory of the United States would not be a problem because there would be an electronic means of communication that would enable citizens to “meet”, discuss issues, and vote (p.105). “The spread of direct democracy is fueled in part by the revolution in communications technology that has given ordinary citizens unprecedented access to information and heightened the desire to participate directly in policy decisions” (Matsusaka, 2005, p. 187). Many states now have electronic voting booths. Blogging has made available new discussions regardless of borders, and the Internet has given citizens unprecedented amounts of information. With that said, Mill stated that there is a difference between talking about getting things done and actually accomplishing business. Dahl (1998) echoes this by stating that “in order for all to meet and engage in a fruitful discussion, even electronically, (is) ridiculous” (p.106). This once again highlights the importance of deliberation, but at this point of representation through initiative and referendums in the democratic process, action is critical. People cannot actually accomplish any of their goals by simply having discussions electronically. There has to be political action.

Mill and Pitkin offered insight into representation and what it entails. For Pitkin, representation is guided by the public interest and for Mill that public interest could only be utilized through deliberation. Deliberation usually takes place because of a public interest guided by a group of individuals with similar interests. Even Hobbes stated that the people are the individuals who give the authority to be represented. From this line of
reasoning, it would seem obvious that direct democracy then embodies all of the philosophies suggestions on some level. Direct democracy functions because the people are engaged in making policy and influencing representatives through various means. However, how the public engages in deliberation may be difficult to measure. How effective that deliberation may be can only be seen after a representative passes a bill or introduces a referendum. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) are used by Bowler et al. (2007) to show discuss direct democracy and they outline the grandeur of public involvement, through direct democracy, but that public involvement may be misguided.

Being an elected official requires a great deal of responsibility because the decisions you make affect many individuals’ well-being. For this reason not very many people want to be in the public limelight. As Cronin (1989) in his article Direct Democracy: The politics of initiative, referendum, and recall noted, most citizens like direct democracy but do not want to take over decision making from elected officials. At the same time, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) offer a similar note showing that people do not want to necessarily be more involved in politics, but rather they feel as though they should be involved. Even though they might not participate, at least they feel as though they should. According to Bowler et al. (2007) article, people support direct democracy and would like to use initiatives and referendums to help influence elected officials, but that does not mean citizens are willing to be more involved and tackle the difficult issues. There is also another interesting caveat alluded to throughout the article: direct democracy has found a stronger following by citizens who are already engaged in politics and share “new democratic ideals” (Bowler et al., 2007, p. 354). Highly educated citizens (college degrees and advanced degrees) will also see more of a need for direct
democracy because they feel they have something to offer the democratic system. This rests on the fact that the more educated have the skills and resources to navigate the convoluted system of public policy making (Bowler et al., 2007, p. 354). Therefore, direct democracy is used by the educated and already engaged who wish for more direct involvement. Even though much of the population of America and other democracies support direct democracy, few are willing to actively change public policy through initiative and referendum.

On the walls of Jefferson Memorial is the following:

“I am certainly not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions. But laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors.”

~ Redacted and excerpted from a letter to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816.

Thomas Jefferson knew that the future would bring about new ideas as did Mill, Pitkin and Dahl, and due to this vision of change, America has been able to adapt to the publics’ needs on some level. However, those wants and desires must be mitigated by deliberation. American government was designed to take time. Government should never quickly react to the passions of men. It is shown by Bowler et al. (2007) that direct democracy has gained ground in the world of democracy, including America, by allowing citizens to use initiatives and referendums in effective ways. This increase in direct democracy stems from a distrust in representatives, and in order to counteract that corruption, people feel that they should be able to take a more influentional role in government. Individuals who participate in direct democracy are not always
representative of the masses, but neither are elected officials. As Gerber (1999) shows in Bowler, et al. (2007) research, direct democracy makes government more responsive to the people through the initiative process. Government’s documents better reflect the mass opinion of the people (Bowler et al., 2007, p. 360). Hibbing and Theiss-Morse are the devil’s advocate. They agree that most people want representatives to follow the public’s opinion more closely, but this does not mean the people want to spend more time involved in politics (Hibbing & Theiss- Morse, 2002, p. 361).

Chapter Seven: The Rise and Implications of Direct Democracy

The goal thus far has been to briefly outline how representation has developed in the Western world according to some of the major political thinkers. In addition, this question asks why representation was developed in America and why representation has fostered both public participation and legislative expertise. The last section showed that the use of initiatives and referendums is on the rise so all voices can be better heard. America devised a mixed system of government in many areas of government but remained focused on representation and freedom. Due to the technology of the modern age direct democracy has become transformed because of the ability of people to communicate across vast distances about a number of issues. Therefore, representation has been impacted by such measures as initiatives, referendums, and public opinion polls, to which Sherman Clark (1999) argues, direct democracy “cannot be trusted to reflect the voice of the people accurately or meaningfully” (p. 434). The impact of direct democracy has greatly affected the 22 states that allow for initiatives and referendums. For example
in California, Oregon, and Washington the use of initiatives has increased from around 100 per year in the 1960’s to around 350 in the last ten years (Matsusaka, 2005, p. 190). What this section will argue is that yes, the factors of direct democracy were created to help better influence representatives, but the other side of the argument is that direct democracy may not be the best determiner of majority will.

Clark’s thesis in *A populist critique of direct democracy* (1999) states the following: “By contrast (to direct democracy), representation, which feels like a limitation of input, actually facilitates the effective use of political power by permitting voters to express both single-issue preferences and inter-issue priorities” (p. 434). This argument rests on the fact that citizens should be involved in the governing process, but that direct democracy is not the best gauge for what is the most important to citizens. Clark argues that citizens need to freely express their opinions, wills, and wants, but not through direct democracy. Their voices should be heard in the voting booth. He notes that representation can feel like a limitation on the people’s ability to express their opinions, but in reality one’s opinion are most accurately reflected through the process of deliberation, as outlined by Mill, and voting. When the people are directly involved their voice should be clearer: “The more direct the process, it is assumed, the clearer the voice of the people” (Clark, 1999, p. 436). This assumption is wrong according to Clark. Access to elected officials does not enhance clarity nor does it ensure a positive outcome. This enhanced access to representatives through direct democracy also undermines deliberation amongst bodies because only certain ideas are being conveyed to a representative.
This acknowledgement of a possible lack of voice by the public in a representative regime is disheartening to some, but Clark’s (1999) argument states the opposite. Direct democracy hinders representation because the voices of direct democracy are narrow in their goals and do not reflect the voice of the majority. According to the definitions of initiative and referendum each suggest something different. Referendums are enacted by the majority because they are usually voted for by the masses; on the other hand, initiatives are more petitions that express the will of the minority. Therefore, referendums are actually representative of the majority. When an interest group lobbies for an initiative, there is not a great deal of deliberation amongst the citizenry or other representatives. For Mill no deliberation is a quandary in the process of representation. He asks which process is better.

The public often hears of logrolling within representative bodies. However, when deliberations are guided by interest groups with narrow goals, the public’s interest can be undermined because not every side has a voice. At the same time, when in history has everyone been equally represented? The point is that deliberation is the vital component in representation. As Clark (1999) states, “representation can refine without diluting” (p. 477). Representation has the power to enact the will of the people, whatever that may be, without reducing the importance of any issue. The elected officials of the American regime foster deliberation and can effectuate popular will by balancing each side. This also assumes there are always at least two sides to deliberate. With that said, direct democracy may appear to be viable within a representative state if interest groups bring forth their concerns to the elected body, but what happens when interests groups
circumvent that avenue of deliberation by stating they speak for the majority? I will address this topic when I discuss my experience.

Dalton et al. (2001) echo a position by providing a model that argues, “citizens themselves can make wise decisions on political matters, whether through referenda, town meetings, citizen initiatives, or other direct means” (p. 142). There is of course good reason to believe that this assumption is correct and that representative democracy has its flaws. Due to this dichotomy of representation vs. direct democracy, Dalton et al. (2001) offer a model that helps to explain the positives and negatives of each. Their argument is not which is better, but rather to show the effects of each and what the future may hold given a shift in the public’s ideas.

Initiatives and referendums, the critical components of direct democracy, exist on some level all over America and even Europe. Dalton et al. (2001) study the Eurobarometer to address the issue of direct democracy vs. representation. Their conclusion is that the greatest support for direct democracy is located among the citizens that are least interested and least informed on general issues; they are issue specific. This is opposite to Bowler et al. (2007) that showed the most educated and most engaged are the ones who advocate for direct democracy. This raises the question then that if certain policy issues are raised by a small faction of society that is not actually informed, what will come to be if the citizens role is more expanded within the democracy (150)? I raise this question not to say they are correct because there are other scholars (Matsusaka 2005, Bowler et al. 2001) who would argue the American citizens specifically are not as ignorant about the issues as some may think, and therefore, deserve more credit to make decisions.
As Clark (1999) makes clear in his article, people should have the right to be involved in the political process. However, such input should not always dictate public policy or the ideal of representatives. Interest groups, initiatives and referendums give representatives an idea about some people’s concerns, but with such communication there is not a distinguishable difference as to what is the most important to the citizenry as a whole, because often times the opinions are the minorities. Public opinion polling has increased the direct role of the citizenry by allowing representatives to see what is important to their constituents.

Paul Bernstein (2003), in his article *The impact of public opinion on public policy: A review and an agenda*, outlines the influence of public opinion polling on elected officials. Bernstein argues that there is no question that public opinion influences representatives. At the same time, there are two other factors that are influential in public opinion: saliency, and the power of interest groups. Salient simply indicates the importance of an issue to a group or the public. Interest groups have already been shown as potent, but saliency is also vital to whether or not an opinion expressed by an individual, interest group, or other public entity will affect an elected official’s mind. Bernstein’s (2003) goal was to generalize about the impact of public opinion on policy. He was unable to attain the necessary data to come to a conclusion. His concern was to look at responsiveness of such public opinion through various outlets to see how representatives respond. At this point there seems to only be specific cases that have been looked at; therefore, generalizability is minimal. The majority of the resources and data are too narrow on the responsiveness of elected officials (Bernstein, 2003, p. 36).

Bernstein’s research shows that public opinion is very influential on representative’s
decisions, but how exactly is still cloudy. The more involved the public is the better is still the common thread. If the majority wants a specific result representatives listen. The issue revolves around the minority and the specific issues that fail to gain ground amongst the mass population: consent!

There is no conclusion to establish at this point, but rather a summary of the opposite opinions of direct democracy vs. representation. Dalton et al. offer the most comprehensive yet simple summary of the varying arguments. One positive to direct democracy is the fact that there is political involvement and that aspects of the population want to be involved. This “enhances the legitimacy of the political process” (Dalton et al., 2001, p. 149).

The next issue that I will address is from my experience and how the public can help mediate political controversies within representative circles. “Representative democracies have become less capable of dealing with difficult political controversies and…referenda are considered a stronger source of political legitimacy…” (Dalton et al., 2001, p. 150). This comment is based upon their research in Europe, but they allude to this being the case in any advanced democracy. Therefore, direct democracy has its positives and should not be overlooked as an advancement in the democratic process due to the fact that more people can actively participate through various avenues in order to have their voice heard.

The negatives of direct democracy are that almost all decisions that are made in this manner boil down to yes-or-no alternatives (Dalton et al., 2001, p. 150). Due to the simplicity of the “the public has spoken” mentality, direct democracy can make it difficult for representatives to over turn the decisions of the people through initiatives and
referendum. Their argument is that by having too many decisions guided by the public there will be a loss of deliberation amongst representatives because they will simply be guided by public opinion, initiatives and referendums, not deliberation. The minority needs to question the voters and whether or not they possess the skills required to make wise choices on very important and delicate policy matters (Dalton et al., 2001, p. 150).

The use of initiatives and referendums can be viewed in two different lights. According to Clark direct democracy does not properly address the voice of the people; only the voting booth can truly determine the significance of what people want. Clark does not discuss deliberation as much as Bowler et al. because representatives should be the ones that do the most deliberating. Bernstein gives evidence for the role public opinion polling plays in the deliberation among representatives. Whether or not the people have the expertise to participate or not is not my main concern, but rather how the population goes about determining what is the most important issues for representatives to hear. The next step is deliberation about how the issue should be handled and finally can a consensus be met. The previous thinkers have shown that representation is a process and certain modern technologies have helped bridge the gap of deliberation. Representatives are in place to hear the voice of the people, but it the people’s responsibility as a citizen to deliberate and reach a consensus.

**Chapter Eight: My Experience with Politics**

In the Summer of 2008, I had the opportunity to run for public office in Douglas County, Nevada. I was born and raised in the small town of Gardnerville/Minden within
Douglas County. I have seen how Douglas County has changed over the years and felt that I could bring new ideas and perspectives to county politics. A few prominent individuals within Douglas County asked me if I would be interested in running for county commissioner. At this time I was twenty-four years old finishing up my coursework for my Masters. This was an awkward situation at first because I wanted to rise to the challenge, yet in reality I was not quite sure what I would be getting myself into.

Douglas County has a volatile political environment with unique issues and even more distinct individuals. I went to school to learn about exactly what I was being asked to do. I took this opportunity believing that I would be able to see politics first hand and make a difference. At the same time, I was thinking what a great honor it was to be asked to step up to such a prominent position at twenty-four. To say the least, it was an experience worth discussing.

I unfortunately lost in the primary election to the incumbent. This experience laid the foundation for this thesis. I was able to take what I know from political theory and compare it to the reality of county politics. The reality is that American government today is not what it was in the 18th century as I have previously outlined and that is not necessarily a negative.

The issue that led me to explore this topic was the issue of transparency. The Founders were explicit in their endeavors and were not out to hide anything. My concern is the fact that transparency in Douglas County is concerned with numbers; are there enough citizens present and vocal to make a justifiable decision. Politics is a process in Douglas County as it is in almost all areas of America. For this reason issues are deliberated in a number of separate bodies before they reach the end of the line, the
county commissioners. There is a great deal of deliberation, or at least there is the opportunity for deliberation. The issue that resonated with me was whether or not an elected official could justify using transparency as a scapegoat for not taking responsibility for his or her own decisions. When this happens it undermines the fabric of American democracy. Direct democracy has positives that have already been shown, but ultimately the decisions of the people need to be upheld and even guided by the people they elected to represent them. The issue surrounds the excuse “I could not make a decision because I did not have enough input from the public, there were not enough people present” is not an excuse under the system of government we have. Elected officials are the only individuals who can actually make policy decisions. They volunteered to make the tough decisions. Responsibility must remain in the hands of elected officials.

As Mill (1859) outlined, representation may rest in the hands of a few, but deliberation should be done by many (p. 36). There is no reason an elected official should not hear from his or her constituents, but once the deliberation on an issue has transpired then the responsibility rests in the hands of the representative, no one else. In Douglas County the people vote. In the last election the voter turnout was 93% of registered voters. Yes, it was a presidential election so voter turnout was high, but people did participate. Voting is not deliberation, which is one of the concerns of advocates of direct democracy, but voting is a balance of power to some degree. As Clark pointed out, voting is the only input for the community in which an issue is made clear to representatives.

Elected officials are supposed to deliberate and come to the best decisions because they have the most information. The citizens give them that authority. It is what
Hobbes and Locke viewed as consent, and that consent was extremely valuable to the Founders and remains so today. As Mill states, deliberation should be done by the most. However, that is what should be done, not what is actually done. It is obvious that the more saliency there is for an issue the more deliberation there is. That deliberation still rests on a few who participate. Transparency is not a negative, and I do not wish to make it so; however, I do wish to point out that transparency should not be used to transfer responsibility or justify consequences for decisions.

Transparency became important in 1953 under the Brown Act in the state of California, otherwise known as the “Sunshine Laws”. The Sunshine Laws were adopted when the state of California in an attempt to safeguard the public’s access to government information, passed the bill to help address the concern of the public about informal, undisclosed local government dealings. In the simplest terms this law made meetings public along with the process and documents of each meeting. This law grew from state to state and at this point in history all states have open meeting laws. In March of 2008 Governor Jim Gibbons of Nevada, by way of executive order, passed the Nevada Open Government Initiative in order to make government more open to the people and more efficient (He does clearly identify the term efficient). The Oklahoma Court's decision in Oklahoma Ass'n of Municipal Attorneys v. State (1978) gives a clear statement of why open meetings are important: "If an informed citizenry is to meaningfully participate in government or at least understand why government acts affecting their daily lives are taken, the process of decision making as well as the end results must be conducted in full view of the governed" (Nadler & Schulman, 2006). I believe that all citizens would agree. Government should be accessible by the people and Nevada has made yet another
attempt to become a more transparent state. The issue of open public meetings arose out
of local concern for conduct of its government. I find it only appropriate to return to local
government to address transparency in a new light.

There are a number of websites that pertain to open government under the
rationale “less secrecy and more democracy” (i.e. openthegovernment.org). Under that
logic that direct democracy is more democratic, such a statement may hold some validity,
but more “transparency” does not lead to more democracy. Nevada is ranked 34th by the
Better Government Association (BGA). The rating is based on existing state laws that
promote integrity. Examples are laws pertaining to campaign finance, open meetings, and
conflicts of interest (BGA 2008). The BGA concludes that each state has plenty of room
for improvement in regard to transparency. I have to ask myself that if each state has
issues regarding ethics and openness then why are more people not speaking out?
Transparency is a concern to some, but there is no percentage to be given here. If this
were a large issue to citizens then why would there not be more of an outcry to open the
government?

From my experience I would have to side with the analysis of Bowler et al. (2007)
due to the fact that their conclusion revolves around the fact that direct democracy takes
place among the educated and already politically engaged. In Douglas County, the main
influence on representatives is the public and its opinions. Whether those opinions come
from speaking at meeting, letters, or phone calls, the representatives hear the concerns
from one or two sections of the public. There are no easily accessible statistics as to the
percentage of the population that makes phone calls or writes letters to representatives
within Douglas County. However, from the discussions at commissioner meetings the
ones who are engaged seem to know what they are talking about and are engaged because they want their representatives to be more responsive to the concerns of the public.

Bowler et al. (2007) conclude that all of their research “suggests that many people view direct democracy as a means to make elected officials more present to ‘the people’ and less influenced by ‘special interest’” (p. 360). I would, however, disagree. Special interest groups tend to be more direct in their influence, and they often only represent a segment of the community. As Saul Levmore (1999) states, “Interest groups may bargain for winning coalitions, they may influence voting procedures or institutions themselves, and they may be more inclined to influence key players when they can do so in nontransparent fashion” (p. 281). Yes, transparency does keep interest groups from dominating the decision making process, but only if there is opposition to the original proposed stance.

The other scenario is if the decision makers are not blinded by the single issue and take into account the other minority or even majority viewpoints, then each voice has been properly heard by the representatives. Therefore, interest groups may not be as powerful in transparent governments because there should always be another interest that counters the single issue with another single issue. This discussions still circles back to the fact that people want to be involved in the process, but the ones that actually are, for the most part, tend to be educated individuals who enjoy politics and are already engaged in some capacity. They are the individuals or group of individuals that make sure there is never one voice that speaks for the majority. Transparency is supposed to make all aspects of government open, but that does not mean citizens are paying attention or participating in that open government. At least when transparency exists, interest groups
may be less apt to influence elected representatives in an unethical manner because someone will always be watching.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

"Oh, posterity, you will never know how much it cost us to preserve your freedom. I hope that you will make a good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in heaven that I ever took half the pains to preserve it.” John Adam’s quote embodies the drive and reflection the Founders possessed. Have we made good use of our democracy? This is a very open question, yet one that should be pondered. My argument was that our Founders called America a republic for specific reasons that were outlined by historical examples. However, progress is an absolute and often over time progress leads to changes that perfect the original design. Whether or not we are a republic or democracy is not the most important question. How the citizens of American are involved and represented is.

I began the research for this topic looking for a justification for transparency and use of direct democracy in a system that was not really created for the direct influence of every individual. What I was looking for was what the Founders envisioned representation to be and how it should function. Direct democracy was not in their definition of representation. However, that does not mean aspects of direct democracy and representation cannot coexist. My experience in local government gave me the empirical evidence to help examine representation through the lens of the original design of America. Douglas County embodies many of the principles the Founders thought
were important for a democracy to exist. Their concern was not local government and
direct democracy, but rather the size of the federal government because they knew it
would be impossible to have a democracy in which all people participated in political
affairs when geography simply would not allow it. Times have changed and modern
technology has bridged part of that gap.

Direct democracy has many positive aspects and proponents of direct democracy
can validate why such an influentional role on representation is necessary to secure the
will of the people. Bowler et al. offer the explanation that direct democracy actually
makes representation work more effectively because the representatives have a clearer
voice from the people. That does not neglect the fact that direct democracy is usually led
by the minority, not the majority. Representation remains the focus of American
government and representation continues to work for the majority of citizens no matter
the size.

Great thinkers such Aristotle, Madison, Adams, Hobbes, Locke, and Mill were
able to offer their insight into the role of representation in government and why human
nature drives us to form mixed systems of government. One type of government does not
always work. Therefore, the Founders took aspects of multiple regimes and included their
strengths in the foundation. As Mill believed, deliberation is the key to valid and
successful representation, while Pitkin advised citizens to make sure they are being
properly represented by being involved in ‘representation’. People’s involvement should
be guided by deliberation. Democracy needs discussion among the people to help
decipher what is important. After the process of deliberation, representatives can make
the best decisions, which leads to consensuses.
My experience in the realm of politics led me to explore this topic through the lens that interest groups, initiatives, and referendums harmed representation. I found that is not the case. Representation functions better today because of things such as transparency. A fine line remains; do representatives in a system of direct democracy retain responsibility and will they uphold their decisions? This question can be answered with a “yes” when deliberation sets the stage. The American concern has always been for the minority, but the majority guides us as a country. That does not mean that the minority does not have the opportunity to become the majority. As Bowler et al. survey shows most people do not participate in direct democracy, but rather the educated individuals who enjoy the realm of politics this group is a minority. At this point in history, direct democracy is not unraveling the fabric of representation, but let as not forget where the responsibility of decisions rests: elected officials.
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