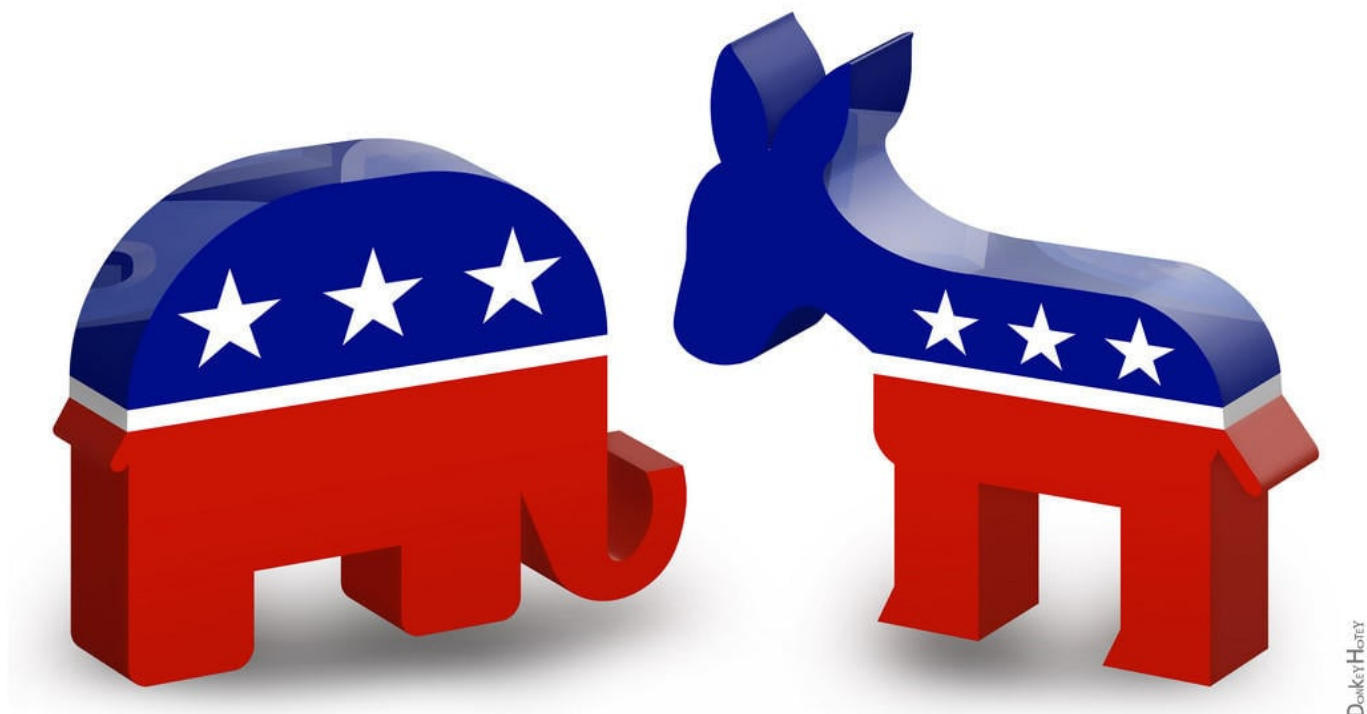


Have We Had Enough of Our Two-Party System?



by Roger L. Simon

Complaints about our two-party system are nothing new and parties other than Democrat and Republican have popped up from time to time, occasionally with memorable names such as the Bull Moose Party.

Even so, they disappear pretty rapidly, the conventional wisdom being that the only thing that really works is the same old, same old.

Further, we look across The Pond, where the parliamentary system reigns and see nothing but chaos. Who can remember the names of those ever-changing political parties?

Who's running Italy this week? What about Spain? How many prime ministers has the UK had since July 2022? (Answer: three, don't forget Liz Truss). What's the name of the latest

party—or 38-party coalition—in Israel trying to finally finish off Benjamin Netanyahu? And don't even get me started on France.

Nevertheless, our Big Tents are shredding. Badly!

Frustration with our traditional parties is pretty much pervasive these days. The only people who seem to love them are the ones who profit from the system—their officials, conventional party politicians, professional strategists, and, of course, most of all, the fundraisers (often in league with the strategists or one and the same).

The yawning gap between We the People and our leadership is beginning to approach the Grand Canyon when it comes to girth.

Voters are beginning to realize this and paying more attention to the individual than to his or her party.

We see this in the rise of both Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Vivek Ramaswamy, neither of whom pay much allegiance to party in the conventional sense, although Mr. Kennedy identifies himself as a Kennedy Democrat, harkening back to a party that barely exists anymore.

Mr. Ramaswamy, who recently appears to be moving into third place in the Republican derby in the [Echelon Insights](#) poll, closer to Ron DeSantis than DeSantis is to Donald Trump, actually said as much at events I attended in New Hampshire.

He specifically identified himself as a man of conservative ideas, giving short shrift to party affiliation. The audiences seemed to approve, even though some of these were official party events.

As for Kennedy, his views, especially in the areas of health care, foreign policy, and intelligence agencies, seem far closer to those of Donald J. Trump or even Mr. Ramaswamy than they do to those of Joe Biden and his cronies.

Mr. Kennedy, however, has denied any interest in a Trump/Kennedy ticket. It's indeed hard to imagine him supporting that at a point in his campaign when he is trying to woo Democratic Party voters. But a year from now, things may be very different.

As for Mr. Ramaswamy, he has stepped forward with an idea that is potentially revolutionary as far as political campaigns are concerned.

Instead of donations being made in the usual manner that cycles anonymous megadonors through back rooms, where they buy favors or force the rest of us to contribute via that ubiquitous Republican operation WinRed (Democrats have similar), with no real knowledge of where the money is going or who is getting a rake-off and how much, he sees instead a peer-to-peer system.

In Mr. Ramaswamy's new approach, his "Kitchen Cabinet" as he terms it, his supporters can donate and solicit contributions from others—where he says they get to keep 10 percent of the successful solicitations themselves—through a personal website dashboard.

There's a lot more to it than that. It may too elaborate and certainly has elements of a publicity stunt. But it's also clear progress away from a corrupt system, being pretty much out in the open and copyable by other candidates.

It would be a political party-free way of financing campaigns, possibly making the Supreme Court's controversial Citizens United decision less relevant and helping do away with the endless PACs that enable, and even dictate, government by rich business interests on both sides.

And, by making candidates less reliant on political parties for support, Mr. Ramaswamy's approach, if successful, would be a body blow to conventional party politics, significantly diminishing its importance.

At the least, it's creative. The devil, as always, will be in the details, which we can assume are ongoing, as well as, naturally, the willingness of a significant part of the public to try it.

Interestingly, Mr. Kennedy happens to be a typical Democrat when it comes to Citizens United. He opposes it, but hasn't offered a better way to finance political campaigns in an era when they are outrageously expensive.

Perhaps he could have a meeting of the minds with Mr. Ramaswamy about this. Kennedy/Ramaswamy, or the reverse, might be an interesting ticket, just as Trump/Kennedy would be.

The one thing we really need is something drastically different than what we've got. And we need it soon. Political parties, particularly their leadership, have less and less to say for themselves.

Roger L. Simon's new book "American Refugees" will be published by Encounter in September.

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