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Will "Americans Elect" Their President in 2012?

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We've all heard the cliché, "If something seems too good to be true, it probably is."

If we tell a conservative that we live in a democracy, they will respond in the negative. "No we don't," the conservative will say. "It's a Republic."

We know that the difference between pure democracy, and a democratic republic is that the former is a place where legislation is debated and laws are passed. In a democratic republic, the president of the Formerly United States of America is elected in a process in which we choose our representatives and vote for the candidate who obtains the greatest number of votes. They represent the voters.

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One of the reasons we don't live in a direct democracy is because, from the very beginning of our nation, direct democracy has been under attack. John Adams, the second president of the then United States of America, said, "[Men in general in every society, who are wholly destitute of property, are also too little acquainted with public affairs to form a right judgment, and too dependent upon other men to have a will of their own.](#)" He said this even as his own wife, Abigail, tried to convince him that women should have the right to vote. Adams thought that possibility both laughable and frightening.

Not long ago, I hitched on to the direct democracy movement promoted by a man named [Stephen Neitzke](#). Neitzke states that direct democracy includes initiative, referendum and recall. Although, as we've recently witnessed in Wisconsin, many states have added direct democracy to their constitutions, it's not difficult to see how initiative, referendum and recall might prove cumbersome on a national level. Nonetheless, it would be the fairest method of self governance.

Add to that the monopolization of our media and the fact that many people get the information they would need to help them decide the issues from biased news sources and the above Adams quote seems to pick up some legitimacy.

I don't want to presume to speak for Mr. Neitzke, but, as I've read much of his writing, it seems to me that he leans a bit to the left. I've read nothing of his that would suggest that he is even mildly a socialist, but his leanings are toward giving more power to all people. He has also written about taking power away from corporations.

This is why when I heard of a non-movement called [Americans Elect](#), I became fairly optimistically curious. AE describes itself as "[the first-ever open nominating process. We're](#)

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using the Internet to give every single voter--Democrat, Republican or independent--the power to nominate a presidential ticket in 2012." Any American who is qualified to vote in The FUSA can sign up to be a delegate to an online "convention" that AE will hold in June. AE will use the convention to nominate a presidential ticket. It claims that it neither has nor supports any political agenda or candidate. It claims that the ticket will reflect the wishes of the delegates.

It insists that it is not a third party, although, in order to get its candidates on the ballots of many states, it has to petition the states as if it was a political party.

At this point, my own ideology will become obvious. I believe it can be said that people like Karl Rove, the Koch Brothers or anyone to the right of center would not create a method to open up direct access to our political process to more people. I pretty much thought that, although AE claims to not promote an ideology of its own, the mere fact that it is creating an open process places it in the center, if not to the left of center. The problem with Democrats, if not Progressives, as I've seen it throughout the years, is that they attempt to open up their tent to anyone and everyone. This is why those who disdain government such as Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush, were able to do more governing than Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Reagan and the Bushes had a Congress with which to work; Clinton and Obama had/have Congresses to whom they can surrender. That is not the entire reason why those "progressives", Clinton and Obama, did not/are not passing progressive legislation, of course, but there's enough to that explanation to write another entire article.

At any rate, the fact that Americans Elect seemed like an attempt to include/involve more people in our political process has, in my mind, "Progressive" written all over it.

I then did some research.

Americans Elect is led by an extremely wealthy, ex-Marine named Eliot Ackerman. He is the son of Peter Ackerman, probably a billionaire and a member of the right wing Cato Institute. The Cato Institute promotes the privatization of Social Security and supports the so called pledge that Grover Norquist somehow forces most Republican members of Congress to sign. The pledge promises that the signatory will never, in any way shape or form, vote to raise taxes. It's a pledge that obviously can only be signed if the signatory has a clear view of the future.

In addition to being run by a billionaire, AE materials ["state that the organization will promote the "sensible center", centrist budgetary views, and a resurgence of centrist politics. The bylaws of Americans Elect state "The ticket shall be balanced around centrist principles"'](#) We all know that Senator Bernie Sanders has said he will not run in 2012 and Dennis Kucinich has not, thus far, threatened to challenge President Obama. According to the "materials" mentioned above, however, Americans Elect would probably have no tolerance for placing either of those people on any presidential ticket. The same should, and could be said about Rick Perry or Michelle Bachman. So much for not having any ideology, hey?

A second troubling aspect of Americans Elect is who they've chosen to collect signatures for petitions that would put them on the ballot in all fifty states.

AE has hired Arno Political Consultants of California to collect signatures. However, Arno Political Consultants have a seedy history.

In 2005, Arno was hired by The Massachusetts Family Institute, an organization wishing to ban same sex marriage, to collect signatures for petitions supporting their movement. What Arno did was to tell unsuspecting passersby that they were signing a petition to allow grocery stores to sell wine. The potential signers agreed with that goal and signed the petition. [The Arno employee would then flip the page and ask the signer to sign a "back-up" copy for their records. When the page was flipped, it was flipped to a totally unrelated petition, a petition which supported the banning of same sex marriage.](#) Thousands of petition signers believed the paid petitioners and actually unwittingly signed a petition banning same sex marriage. The state legislature discovered Arno's bait and switch method and reported it to The Massachusetts Family Institute. The institute claimed they didn't know that this unethical methodology was happening.

[This wasn't the first and/or only time that AE's trusted signature gathering contractor had pulled this kind of bait and switch move in getting signatures on petitions.](#)

There is also a serious problem with who is funding Americans Elect.

For the most part, AE is not showing the good faith transparency that a Progressive would want them to show. Americans Elect has raised \$20 million from just 50 people, a whopping average contribution of \$400,000 per person. Although I signed on as a "delegate" to AE, I can assure you that I am not one of those 50 people.

The only donations that are transparent so far are:

1. [\\$1.55 million worth of contributions from Peter Ackerman](#)
2. [An undisclosed amount contributed by hedge fund operator Kirk Rostrom.](#)

Hedge Funds, as we all know, are filled to the brim with derivatives. Most of us know that derivatives are bets placed by Wall Street investors. We also know that these patriotic investors bet that Americans would fail to maintain their subprime mortgages and would default. Not surprisingly, most of them were right. They did bet on other pro-American "games" like pension funds. Again, they optimistically bet that pension funds would be wiped out and, again, for the most part, they were right.

Those bets were backed up by firms such as Goldman Sachs, whence many of the members of the last administration as well as the present administration came and, no doubt, to which they

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will return. When GS couldn't come up with the cash to pay all of the gamblers that they insured, we, the taxpayers, bailed them out.

3. Jim Holbrook, who as CEO of the marketing firms Emak Worldwide, Neighbor and Upshot, who has special interests in the advancement of the marketing industry. More than this, though, Jim Holbrook is Chairman of the Promotion Marketing Association, a trade organization for the \$750 Billion industry. The website of the Promotion Marketing Association makes it clear that it has special interests and is dedicated to pursuing those special interests in the spheres of American law and government. It has an entire section devoted to "Legal and Governmental Affairs", with a publication entitled "PMA Legal Watch," a "PMA International Law Book," and an annual Marketing Law Conference. The PMA Bylaws stipulate explicitly that it is an organization dedicating to pursuing the interests of the promotion marketing industry.

They identities of the other 47 contributors are still a mystery.

Another mystery is what Ainsley Perrien, "Press Secretary" for AE, told OEN in a phone interview. "Americans Elect would like to see a ticket which contains two people who have differing ideologies." Can you see it now? Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders will be on the East Coast while Vice Presidential candidate Rick Perry is on the West Coast disagreeing with everything Sanders is saying to the east of him.

Last but not least is a legitimate concern about the security of the site. Could someone actually hack the site and "stuff the ballot box", so to speak? Even though Joshua Levine, former Chief Technology Officer for E-Trade, is the person who will be overseeing this part of the operation, it doesn't seem to matter, does it? I'm more concerned about the hacking that may very well come from within the organization than from without.

Does this fly in the face of my original premise that such right of center people and organizations wouldn't even consider opening up our electoral process in what seems to be such a democratic fashion? Yes, unless, of course, those who created Americans Elect are hoping that more Progressives than Conservatives would find their methodology appealing. Of course, we Progressives are quite disappointed in President Obama's becoming the third best Republican president in American history - after Lincoln and Clinton. Many of us want to see Obama primaried, will cast our vote for the Green or Socialist Party or will just stay home on Election Day.

Ah, but now we have another choice. Americans Elect will help us not only to vote for an alternative to Obama, but will allow us to nominate those candidates. That's a hook into which Progressives can really sink the roofs of their mouths.

I don't claim to be able to read minds, but I would almost bet that the real purpose of Americans Elect is to take votes away from President Obama. It sounds so appealing that it just may work.

Of course, it's good that the Ackermans and their ilk have money with which to cavalierly play because I'm not really certain that they need to go through all of this trouble to pull votes from Barack Obama.

Nonetheless, just so that you aren't suckered by AE, I strongly suggest that you stay away from their dirty trick. If you want Obama to lose, vote for someone else or don't show up. However, don't allow the sleazebags at AE to control you. That's just my suggestion. Take it or leave it.

To friendship,

Michael

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Michael Bonanno is an associate editor for OpEdNews.

He is also a published poet, essayist and musician who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Bonanno is a political progressive, not a Democratic Party apologist. He believes it's ([more...](#))

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