

Responsive Government and Competitive Races

Our VISION for reforming America's political system includes making our Congressional races competitive - in each election cycle.

Today's Congressional races are uncompetitive. They are this way by design of the two major political parties.

When a seat is won, the incumbent has a natural advantage, to be sure. However, there are other forces conspiring to keep incumbents in power - forces that make the races uncompetitive.

These forces are:

- **Gerrymandering**. This is the art of making unnaturally shaped boundaries of a district to include constituents who will be more likely to vote for the constituent. This word is a *portmanteau* - a word formed by the combination of other words, in this case Gerry + salamander. It originated in 1812 when Massachusetts Governor Eldridge Gerry drew a political map resembling a salamander to favor his party.
- **Financial**. An incumbent will naturally draw in more money - payola to many - since obtaining (buying?) his influence translates to a sure thing in terms of legislative support. Money is poison to representative government; the policies end up supporting monied interests at the expense of policies that would help constituents.

Competitive elections mean representatives need to pay close attention to their constituents' needs. They no longer are a sure thing to moneyed powers which want to have their legislative needs taken care of. But to the **People**, this means better representation of their concerns.

Our vision is to overcome these forces to have races in which the candidates have to compete — each time, each election — to naturally drive a responsive and attentive government.

How we are going to do this is encapsulated in our calls to action to:

- Reform the primary system to be open,
- Elect officials to State Houses who are committed to ending gerrymandering, and
- Enact term limits to periodically bring in new ideas.

Our other strategy is to run effective but lower cost campaigns (HL to Ultimate Campaign Finance Reform) and win against well-monied campaigns. This is a challenge, but we strongly believe that when the ***People*** themselves opt for this, the use of excessive money becomes a liability, and fades from the political toolkit.

CIV values **Merit Over Money**.

... And so our vision concludes with one final picture of enjoying TV during election season — *without being continuously slammed by repeated political ads*. **This is a vision we can all agree on.**