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SAVING DEMOCRACY:

A PLAN FOR REAL REPRESENTATION IN AMERICA

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. DIONNE: I should tell you that I come at this book as both a strong friend and a skeptic. As I told Kevin when we talked months ago, I always thought that Oscar Wilde's criticism of socialism, which was also a criticism of any form of highly participatory democracy, is the problem with socialism is that it would require too many evenings, that is to say too many meetings, and at the gatherings of the politically assiduous, victory often goes not to the wisest nor to the strongest nor to the majority but to the loudest and to those who can sit and sit and sit. Now, Kevin has a variety of solutions to that problem which he will talk about.

I just want to share with you what some very thoughtful people have said about his book. That quote, by the way, came from a review I wrote many, many, many years ago of a wonderful book called *Beyond Adversary Democracy* written by a political scientist named Jane Mansbridge. Jane wrote a perfect blurb for Kevin's book. She said: America needs this book. These imaginative, yet practical, reforms are designed to bring citizens back to their own politics and inspire them to work together for the common good.

James Fallows of the *Atlantic Monthly* said: *Saving Democracy* is a stimulating and original proposal to make political deliberation far more inclusive and representative than it is today.

That is a noble goal. I think, as I said, that this is a quite brilliant effort to

get us to think about different forms of democracy than those we are accustomed to.

I am also grateful to Congressman Earl Blumenauer and to Brookings' own and *National Journal*'s own Jonathan Rauch, also two people who always think outside the box, and I will introduce them after Kevin speaks.

It is a real honor to introduce Kevin O'Leary and to thank him for writing this book that I think will be genuinely helpful as we try to fix our democracy.

Kevin, it is good to have you here.

(Applause)

MR. O'LEARY: Thank you very much. It is an honor and pleasure to be at The Brookings Institution.

Thank you, E.J., for those kind remarks and taking interest in the book and inviting me to speak here today, to Jonathan and the Congressman for agreeing to be on the panel and being interested, and to Korin Davis for helping to make the arrangements in getting this together.

There is a core question, as E.J. has spoken about this. The core question driving this book is: How can we make democracy meaningful and alive in modern America?

How can we give real power to citizens in a responsible way, so that the nation is run by more than 435 in the House, 100 in the Senate, and the President, so 536 people when we have 300 million?

If you deal with this question, you have to deal with the challenge of scale and grapple with population head-on. It is interesting; when I was researching the book, there is not that much written in the political science literature on scale. Robert Dahl and Tufte wrote a book on size and democracy about 20, 25 years ago, but there is not that much after that.

Much of the 20th Century, in terms of the struggle for democracy was about inclusion, and that is very important. If you go back to the Greeks, as I did in writing the book, of course, they are famous for having male citizens of Athens, and everybody else -- women, slaves, children, and barbarians -- are outside. Certainly, we have had this struggle. So, at the beginning of the 20th Century, we have the Women's Movement and then finally in the sixties, the great Civil Rights Movement and then pushing for other groups since then. We arrive at 2006 where nearly everybody is included in the demos, and we can all participate, but at the same time, there is a felt sense that is hard to give statistical data but a sense that democracy doesn't mean as much as it did in the past, and I think that is the challenge for us now.

In reference to this, Howard Fineman writing in the most recent *Newsweek* about the election says: "At the national level, you had the usual fistfight, only worse, erupted for the control of Congress, three billion worth of nightmarish sloganeering and namecalling that did little to settle the world's most pressing issues."

Of course, when you have an election, you must have both sides clarifying issues and using whatever advantages they can to win the election. One of my questions in this book is: Is that the only way we want to think about democracy in the country? Is it elections every two years or every four years that is when everybody comes together and gets to have a say?

On this question of scale, we start out, of course, with 3 million people, and then by the Civil War, we had 33 million, and now we have got 300 million. So it is a dramatic, dramatic increase in scale. When I started writing the book, I wasn't sure where the U.S. ranked in terms of national population across the world and actually, we are number three after China and India. It is not Russia. It is not others. We are number three. It is true; we have a lot of space in the West to fill out, but still, we have this huge population.

MR. DIONNE: Not if Congressman Blumenauer has anything to do with it.

MR. O'LEARY: In that sense, one is reminded of the Mort Sahl joke about the 1960 election which I guess we had maybe 160 million at that time or 170 million. Now, we look back and we say, oh gosh, really qualified people, Jack Kennedy and Nixon, but at the time he was saying: Look, we have this country with all these people now, 160 million plus, and at the founding, they had Jefferson, Hamilton, George Washington, Ben Franklin, on and on and on. You know what this proves? This proves Darwin was wrong, basically.

So, now we are 300 million and we have the people we have for elections at the national level, at the Presidential level.

The founders, they didn't design the Congressional system, especially the House. Think about the districts now. The districts are 650,000 at the last census. We are going towards 700,000 quickly. If you had that size at the founding, you would have had a Congress of five. Madison wasn't designing the Congress to have Nancy Pelosi, Hastert, and three friends. That wasn't the idea.

But if you look at the national system the way I do and basically say if you are going to do reform that is going to improve democracy and have a way of grabbing people and getting them interested enough to say this resonates with me, you have to look at the American tradition. You can't really run off to Europe and look at parliamentary systems or multiple parties or that kind of thing. So I go back to the founders and try to develop something that deals with the House because the House was the one part of the constitutional system that Madison said: I want the House to have an "intimate" connection, intimate sympathy with the people.

With the Presidency, you have the distant form in terms of the Electoral College. At that time, of course, you have indirect elections for Senate. But the House is the part of the government he wants to have a connection with people. He had a real struggle at the founding on the size of the districts because the anti-Federalists went crazy when Madison proposed districts originally of 1 to 40,000.

In one of the few times that George Washington got involved in the debates, he said: Now, now, James, maybe we should cut that back to 1 to 30,000.

If we had districts of 1 to 30,000 today, that would be wonderful, right? We would feel more of a connection with the Federal Government. But you can't increase the size of the legislature itself. The last time we increased the House of Representatives was the early 20th Century where we got to 435 seats which is where we are today, and the districts at that time were approximately 250,000. So we have left the districts, the number, the same and we have increased. You would have to quadruple the House or more to make any difference in how citizens felt a connection. So I say don't do that. That would be silly.

Part of my effort in this book to hook it back to intellectual history is I go back the great debate that was started in the 20th Century between Walter Lippman and John Dewey. Of course, Lippman had written the book, the famous book, *Public Opinion,* and then he followed it with a sequel that is very much connected with it, called *The Phantom Public*. He is basically saying: Look, in this complex modern world with urbanization and a national government and all these issues and a foreign policy. Of course, he was right; that was his expertise.

How can the public possibly keep up? You are going to have to basically give it to people like myself. Let the experts do things.

Now, he was followed and that line of thinking was followed by Joseph Schumpeter, a famous economist at Harvard, who wrote a seminal book in the

field of democratic theory. There are a couple of chapters on capitalism, socialism, and democracy in 1942 that are just crucial in how most political scientists and then journalists and then the public talk about democracy. We see it as a process, as a democratic method. It is a way of selecting our rulers. We get to choose our rulers is how Schumpeter talks about it. It is a very almost minimalist understanding of democracy.

Somebody who has followed up with that to some extent would be Fareed Zakaria at *Newsweek* and his book, *The Future of Freedom*. I very much like what he is talking about in terms of international politics and how you must have constitutional liberty, but in terms of America, he is much on the elitist side.

Now, the other side of the debate was John Dewey, and he responded to Lippman's book with his own *The Public and Its Problems*. Then Christopher Lasch has been one person who stands out in recent memory, working on this kind of problem.

So I pick up the ball, in a sense, from Dewey and Christopher Lasch and try to come up with an institutional arrangement for: How could you ground this? How could you make this work?

I am from California. I grew up in California and came east to go to grad school and I have been living in California for the last decade or so. California is a microcosm of the Country in the sense of having 33 plus million, maybe 35 million people, a huge amount of population, and of course, California is one of

the states that pioneered the initiative system. So that was an effort, if you think of this conceptually, of you can have direct participatory democracy over here, you can have representative democracy over here. A lot of times people who wanted to have more participation have oriented toward the Rousseauian wing of direct participation, and the progressives were able to say, let us take that idea and make a mass direct democracy with the initiative system, but as we know and David Broder has written about and lots of folks, the initiative system has some problems.

The radicals of the sixties, they didn't really address the problem of scale that much in the sense that they went off into communes such as in the book that you were talking about, E.J., Mansbridge's book, studying a commune situation in a small town in Vermont, about direct democracy and how that works and how it is different than elections.

I think you have to go the other way. We have pushed direct democracy as far as you can go. In my book, I am saying let us go to the representative pool and tinker with that. I go back to Madison and play with his ideas and blend in Thomas Jefferson and that gives it resonance for readers.

The basic proposal -– you have a handout -– is this. It is pretty simple. It is basically combine the town hall tradition in American politics and now we have the internet for the last 15 years. Take the town hall tradition, select 100 people per Congressional District. So the structure stays the same but underneath each

Congressman or Congresswoman, you would have 100 people meet, selected by lot. They would meet a couple times a month. Maybe that deals with the time problem to some extent. They wouldn't meet all the time. They wouldn't deal with all the issues. But on the most important issues where the public has to be involved or for even a President such as George Bush who says, I don't read the polls, when it is something really, really significant, say, going to war with Iraq or social security reform, he has to look at the numbers and see what is there. These people would deal with the big issues, HMO reform, prescription drugs. They would pick the issues themselves, but they wouldn't deal with committee work. They wouldn't deal with the smaller issues that occupy a lot of time in Congress.

If we did that, what would happen? We would have a two-stage reform. The first stage I call the Citizens Assembly. It would not have formal power. The Citizens Assembly would meet face to face. I think the face to face part is very important. Sunstein of Chicago has written about this, that that element is key. The internet would allow everybody to communicate, and you would have a vote which would be a deliberative poll similar to what James Fishkin has talked about in his work over the last decade plus. I think journalists like myself, E.J., Jonathan Rauch, the journalistic community, the television stations, they love polls. The local papers would like to see what is going on with this. It would be a third local entity like a city council, like a school board for local papers to cover, except these people would be connected to national issues.

On the situation where -- Fishkin has done studies -- if you have people meet, you are not expecting them to be policy experts, but if you have average folks meet and talk about things, their knowledge level goes up pretty fast. There is a national issue forum and groups that the Kettering Foundation has run. It is a similar process to that, where they take a group and they will take an issue like energy policy, the energy proposal by the President, and they will divide it into three different ways of splitting up the pie, maybe not along traditional lines, and they will ask people to think about that. Then you have people actually weighing the choices. Too often, we have regular opinion polls in which people will say, we want the benefits, the classic thing, but we don't want taxes, and they don't put the two together.

A group like this would have to see the consequences of what they are talking about, and they would understand the basic choices. Now, one reason this is important is something Robert Dahl talks about, the famous political theorist at Yale, which is sure, in Washington, we have all this talent, all these people who are experts on every single public policy question imaginable. So you have all this talent in places like Washington and the big state capitals. But on a lot of issues, even nuclear weapons, according to Dahl, they are moral questions that you must have average people involved in the decision on those questions. Otherwise, we are basically giving up our democratic rights, and we are saying the guardians can take care of it. You end up on this gentle slope down to

guardianship. Maybe it is very benign and you don't recognize what is happening, but you are basically ceding part of your sovereign power.

The Citizens Assembly would come up with a deliberative opinion poll that would be a second form of public opinion to the regular Gallup, NBC, whatever. The problem with those is what? The problem with regular polls is they are very scientific, right? They are scientifically valid, but you only need 800 to 1,000 people to make the poll happen. So most of us have never been called by a national poll. I think actually last week, my wife was called by Gallup and she was upset that she wasn't there because that has never happened to her before.

The other problem is because it is so rare to be called by a regular poll, people don't have a reason to pay attention. There is so much information in Washington. There are so many good journalists writing great stories, but people don't necessarily take it in because where am I going to use that. That is what Christopher Lasch talked about in his *The Revolt of the Elites and Betrayal of Democracy* book, that if you had a reason for the information, then people would do something with it. A Citizens Assembly would do that.

Now, there is a second stage to the reform. You could, if this thing worked well at the state level and that is probably where it would start, you could give this entity, the Citizens Assembly, the vote and then it would be called the People's House. This is a more dramatic reform. It would probably require a constitutional amendment, so it would be hard to put into place, but most of the

changes in the American Constitution over time, most of the amendments, as Robert Dahl has pointed out, have to do with democracy.

You could see and if there was a groundswell and people said: We really want to be involved and this makes sense to us. This would ground us in the American experience, the reason that America is a special democracy. We want to do this.

You could have this power of the vote. The vote would l have a couple of interesting things to it. One, you could accelerate the process. Often, you have situations where a committee chair maybe at the behest of the leadership or whatever -- committee chairs are very powerful folks as we know from the fights going on right now on who gets to be chair -- they may not want a bill to go out to the floor to a vote in the House or the Senate. What if you had a situation where you had a mechanism that the People's House could vote, maybe by super majority, to say: Let us let that HMO bill that everybody thinks is a good idea, at least to have a vote on, 70 percent of the public thinks this is really important. Let us send that to the floor and have a vote on it now, not six years from now.

Or, number two, you could have a veto technique where if a bill came out of Congress, and one example would be the Appropriations bills where it has become like the Ornstein-Mann book that is out on Congress, *The Broken Branch*, where they talk about the Appropriations bills that have just been tagged with all these extra markups. You have a pork problem where the basic bill is good but

there is so much pork that we say, wait a second, this is crazy. There are journalistic reports on this. But what are you going to do about it?

Number two would be a situation like the first Patriot Act which, even if you agreed with it, you could say it was an embarrassment on how it was passed because it was passed basically in the middle of the night and only the leadership maybe had read it and most members of Congress didn't have a chance to read it and they were forced to make a vote on it. Something as important as that, you could send it back and say: Wait a second; try again. The process is flawed here. At least let the people in Congress, at least let the 435 House members read the bill before you make them vote on it.

I think that could correct some of the flaws in the process now.

Let me say one thing on selection, and this may come up in discussion. I thought a lot about you could have these people elected in a Congressional district, but then I decided to go with lot which would be like a random selection. Choosing by lot would give you a cross-section of ethnicity, a cross-section of economics, versus if you had it by election, then it becomes part of the electoral process and the local party machines, and some people who would be very good delegates to this wouldn't want to take the time or the energy or just the potential embarrassment or whatever of running for the office, but they might be very good delegates. A lot of people aren't very fond, in the great public, of partisanship or the parties. So this has appeal as something that is more neutral, more non-

partisan. It is a cross-section of America, and it is a check on the political system.

Let me just end by saying the so-what question. I have this idea on participation and wouldn't that be charming? Why is that important for us as Americans?

It is important because if you think about it, what is special about America? I would submit that it is not capitalism, even though we have the greatest capitalist engine and free market economy in the world. It is not our superpower status. That could come and go. It is not even liberty in the sense of negative liberty as is thought of and limited government. That is not as distinctive as it might be. It is not even our unique consumer culture and our mass media that dominate the globe.

I think what is important is this understanding of how we understand democracy, that it is not a minimal form of democracy, and that it has two extra things to it. It is not just elections, though those are crucial. It is also what Fareed Zakaria talks about in terms of constitutional liberty and the rule of law. That is certainly important, and we find that out when we are trying to export democracy across the world.

There is also another. You can think of it as a triangle almost. The other corner of the triangle would be what civic Republicans refer to as political freedom and that is the ability of people to come together and be political equals and talk to each other as political equals. The fundamental political right,

democratic right for the Greeks is expressed in this. They had a term called isegoria. That was the right to go to the assembly and not only to sit and listen to the great speakers but also to occasionally raise your own hand and rise up and address the assembly.

We don't have any place in the system right now where we have that right as Americans, but that is part of our tradition. That is what drives us. We are not only liberals in the Lockeian sense of individual rights, private property, limited government, but we are also the civic republic strain that goes back to Aristotle and runs through Machiavelli and comes through the American Revolution and actually sparks the American Revolution. That animated Jefferson. It animated Madison. It animated a lot of thinkers through our ages.

I end the book with a quote in the conclusion from Hannah Arendt who was one of the first modern writers to write about this again. She wrote: "If the ultimate end of the American Revolution was freedom and the constitution of a public space where political liberty could appear, then the elementary republic of the words -– which is what Jefferson wrote about –- that is the only tangible place where everyone can be free, meaning freedom to stand and speak to one's fellow citizens. Actually, that would be the end of the great republic whose chief purpose in domestic affairs was to provide people with such places of freedom and to protect them."

That is what makes America. There are lots of arguments and

commentaries and books about American exceptionalism. That is part of American exceptionalism. We have this special understanding of democracy, and that is what drives us. That is what drives areas of reform and participation like the sixties and gives our politics a unique character that is different than just, oh, we are another democracy. We are a special democracy. That is why this idea of a Citizens Assembly has appeal and that is why I think people will be interested in it.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: Kevin reminded me, by the way, of another reason why I liked his book which is that we focus so much on our liberal tradition -- liberal in the sense that American conservatives are liberal too – and our individual rights tradition and so little on our civic republican tradition which is always there and is actually an almost unspoken, undiscussed tradition that influences a lot more of what we think than we realize.

Incidentally, when I introduced Kevin, I did not report on all his wonderful credentials, so I will do that. He earned his Ph.D. at Yale, his B.A. at UCLA where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude and was a fellow in Public Affairs. He has been a professor at UCLA in Clermont, at the Clermont Colleges. He lives in Irvine, California, with his wife and two daughters.

It now gives me great pleasure to introduce, as I said before, two thinkers

who never, ever think exactly along any lines that I know of that are established in Washington, D.C.

Congressman Earl Blumenauer began his political career while still an undergraduate at Lewis and Clark College. He spearheaded an unsuccessful effort to lower Oregon's voting age and later a successful national effort to lower the voting age. In keeping with his belief that young people should participate in politics, he was elected to the Oregon Legislature at the age of 23 and won every precinct in his district, so he didn't need these assemblies. He was in touch with absolutely everybody.

In 1978, he was elected to the Monmouth County Board of Commissioners. In 1986, he was elected to the Portland City Council where he served as the City's Commissioner of Public Works. He was elected to the U.S. Congress in May of 1996.

Now, for those of you who don't know Congressman Blumenauer, you ought to because he has taken an idea. He has in some ways taken the Portland idea of creating livable communities and brought it to the whole nation. He started an organization called Livable Communities. He has gotten the Congress to take this seriously. He formed the Task Force on Livable Communities also, by the way, the Bicycle Caucus, and the Army Corps Reform Caucus. He has even gotten this idea of livable communities through the heads of thick-headed journalists like me, and I have been very grateful for his work on this.

He is true to his calling as a member of the Bicycle Caucus. The last time I had lunch with him was in Portland where he arrived right off his bicycle, wearing the things bicyclists wear, and I told him, you will never catch me dead wearing something like that because you can and I can't. He actually moves around his district, riding a bicycle. He doesn't just talk about the importance of livability.

Jonathan Rauch, many of you here know is a senior writer and columnist for the *National Journal*, a correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly*, and he has authored several books which I will get to. He is a Guest Scholar here at Brookings. We are very proud of that. In 2005, he received the National Magazine Award for columns and commentary, and I can tell you that is not an easy award to win. His latest book is *Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America*. I think in some ways his most relevant books for today are a book called *Demosderosis* which was later expanded in a book called *Governments End: Why Washington Stopped Working*. He has won a slew of other awards which I won't get to.

I am very grateful to Congressman Blumenauer and to Jonathan for being here. They will reply to this. I may pose a couple of questions including revisiting the question of why not elect these people, and then we will open it up to all of you.

Congressman Blumenauer, bless you for coming.

MR. BLUMENAUER: Thank you. Actually, I will stand up if that is all right.

MR. DIONNE: Yes, please.

MR. BLUMENAUER: I appreciate the invitation anytime to retreat and think a little bit here at Brookings, also, this week being able to get away from the arm-twisting and all the stuff with the leadership. It was a blessing.

MR. DIONNE: Steny Hoyer and John Murtha right outside.

MR. BLUMENAUER: Yes, a blessing in disguise.

I do have to make one modest clarification because I really like Kevin's book. It was thought-provoking. It meshes a bit with some things that I was thinking about. It was Oregon that developed the initiative and referendum which we inflicted on California, and they have been getting even with us ever since – Prop 13, three strikes and you are out; my favorite, term limits, stop me before I vote again. It was Oregon innovation that, unfortunately, we have inflicted.

Let me do a couple of things very quickly. E.J., you can cut me off anytime you want. I will start by just saying the three things that I feel strongly about in terms of reaction because in my judgment, the notion of introducing scale and alternatives to how we formulate public policy structure is very useful, but I would suggest that as an interim, there are three things we have to do.

First, we need to take our existing structures and get them properly aligned. There is nothing inherently wrong so much with what we have now, but we have

too much of it. Americans have more government that they need, they deserve, and they can afford, and most of it is stuck in time boundaries that are in some cases not just decades but centuries old and they were stupidly drawn. My favorite is using a body of water to demark between jurisdictions. When we get to that point, I will talk about that in a moment, time permitting; first, properly aligning the structures.

Second are appropriate uses of technology. Kevin, you are getting at that a little bit here.

Third is using the right issues to engage the public.

This, I think can get us along the road, and unless and until we do that, we will never have the political capacity to get to the brave new world that Kevin is suggesting to us.

For me, the most important sentence in the book -- I am quite frustrated. I got the book last night after a very long day on the Hill. So I did what anybody would do, commenting on it. I went to the conclusion and read it. This is interesting and challenging. I could have saved myself that time because on page 5 in the introduction, I think are the two most profound notions: Today, many citizens appear to endorse, at least implicitly, democracy without citizens. Further down in the next paragraph: But it is impossible not to include the public in the equation -- something I have learned painfully over 37 years in the political process. Thank you for revealing my advanced age.

The public is ultimately going to be involved. The question is: When and how?

I think the issue for me, again discovering very painfully over time, is that there are two levels of political participation. There is an immediate and more emotional reaction which I encounter all the time as a politician, and that is where the media and the politicians are locked in an often, dare I say, incestuous mutual dependency -- the rating game, the next election, often disastrous results and not just in the long term. In part, it is because we are both addicted to polls-ratings and we employ many of the same consultants or the same techniques. While we are having rating games and polls and this emotional cross-current that takes place and the short-term consequences on the front page, the evening news, and the next election, there is a second deeper level of awareness and processing that is at work, more so with the public than politicians, but it is there.

I would mark, for example, in my judgment, the turning point for this election. These seeds were sown back with the Terry Schiavo debacle and with Katrina, sort of undermining some of the things that had been done, planting seeds of discontent and unease in the minds of a vast cross-section of the public. Even Fox News was forced to show the incompetence of this Administration and the nature of a whole series of political issues that are hard to make public.

Three decades of public attitudes on capital punishment, I think is an example. I think gay marriage is going to be the next. These currents, they move

very slowly, but we are seeing it with capital punishment. When I started as a young legislator, 80 percent of the people I represented were strongly in support of capital punishment, and it was a bruising experience on the door step for somebody who doesn't believe in it because it started bubbling up and it got worse and worse and worse Voters in Oregon, through the initiative process, reinstituted capital punishment, but now it is starting to run the other way. When a journalism class can find 19 people on death row who shouldn't be there, when we are one of three countries in the world that really practices it other than China and South Africa, the public is starting to become uneasy. They are starting to shift. Politicians haven't quite figured that out yet.

I do think that democracy is remarkably resilient. Last week, I think was a demonstration of that. But I do think that it is more fragile than we think and the salvation of democracy as it were is, I think, contingent on several steps. I mentioned the first one which is getting properly aligned.

I think we are moving rapidly towards a situation where people focus on their neighborhood. That is what we do in Livable Communities. We work with people on things that impact their neighborhood. They care about that. It touches them. Street trees, people will chain themselves to them. Everybody is an expert on what should happen to traffic in their immediate vicinity. We are starting to see this from coast to coast, Red State, Blue State. People are engaging in their immediate neighborhood in a different way. We have not yet formalized it in

most communities, but we are going there.

The second is that cities and states are increasingly irrelevant except for the geographic boundaries. What matters in this Country is the metropolitan area. We have some research coming out of Brookings. It is great stuff. That is how people think of themselves. People who don't live in Detroit know they are from Detroit, and it is the metropolitan area that is the driver. I am finding, ironically, around the Country, politicians and business people who will say: We don't believe in this regional stuff. We could never do anything like that. How do you do that goofy thing in Portland?

But I am finding that citizens and business people and the media increasingly understand that that is how we are organized; that is how we think; that is the economy; and we need to be developing more mechanisms for people to work at that regional level to be able to have results.

Mega-regions are emerging and America is going to be living in about 15 mega-regions within the next 15 years, and that is what is going to drive the economy. That is what is going to drive politics. You saw it in this last election. You are seeing it in Virginia and in Maryland, for instance.

The last point deals with getting the issues right because that is part of why I work on livable communities and try and boil it down into things that matter to people that aren't partisan and that have simple, common sense, effective solutions.

Actually, I have a handout. If I don't pass this out, somebody who worked real hard to develop it and format it will be disappointed.

MR. DIONNE: I will take one.

MR. BLUMENAUER: I have these five ideas, great ideas to save the world that are simple, cost-effective, bipartisan, that are a lot of fun, and we are going to end up doing them.

Greening the military; the Department of Defense is the largest consumer of energy in the world. It has the largest concentration of Superfund sites, unexploded ordnance, military toxins, and we are spending a million dollars a minute on the Department of Defense, and it is in every state of the Union. Well, we have an opportunity to harness the instincts of the best and brightest in the Department of Defense because they want to build green buildings; they want to save energy. You talk to the people in the War College. They know that an aircraft carrier gets 17 feet to the gallon and that we wouldn't be in Iraq if they were sitting on the world's second largest supply of rutabagas. It is all about energy. It is about conservation. It is about cleaning up after ourselves. This is an example of a simple issue.

I met today with defense contractors who clean up this stuff. There is an industry ready to, I won't use the term, explode, but it is an organizing principal that brings people together and not divide them.

I won't go through all of them here. You can look at them, in terms of

transportation and land use in livable communities, water policy to protect health at home and abroad, an agricultural policy for the 21st Century. You are spending $23 billion going mostly to six states to grow 13 commodities that the world doesn't need any more of, and it is bad for the taxpayer, and it is bad for the environment, and it is bad for most farmers. If we learn how to get these issues right, we could have something. In fact, I am making a proposal to both Brookings and Cato to co-host a series of for a here in Washington, D.C. on the Farm Bill that is going to be up in the next Congress. Unite Red and Blue.

Preparing for natural disasters; E.J. and I had a great conversation about New Orleans which was in part that our disaster policy as a Country is a disaster. It is not just helping people in the middle, but it is preventing disasters and it is cleaning up afterwards. I was down in New Orleans for the first anniversary and stunned, talking to people in terms of what we haven't done billions of dollars later.

So from where I sit, I love the notion of interjecting scale into this discussion, challenging the structures that we have because we are going to have to change them.

But I think, just from where I sit because I am kind of the mailman and I am kind of practical after a third of a century in this business, I am looking for ways to make that transition. For me, making that transition is to get the government structures properly aligned, and there are a gazillion people out there that want to

do it. It is to think about how we use these amazing technological applications. Then it is picking and phrasing our issues right, so that we engage the public in ways that they can get excited and they understand because, ultimately, they will have the last word.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

And Jonathan?

MR. RAUCH: Wow, hard acts to follow. Thanks to everybody. Thanks particularly to Kevin.

I am still thinking about that aircraft carrier, 17 feet to the gallon. I had an old Chevrolet that did about that. I got rid of it.

Particularly, thanks to Kevin for his book, *Saving Democracy*, modestly titled and also modestly conceived as a really big new proposal, the sort of thing we need more of around Washington. *Saving Democracy*, if you have a chance to read it -- I suggest you do, by the way -- is a short book which is nice for a change. It is not too long. It is very, very well read, very erudite but also well written. It is clear. You can understand it, even if you are not a political scientist.

It also combines the familiar with the fresh in a very interesting way, at least for me. The familiar is the basic diagnosis of what he thinks is wrong with government which is the progressive critique of government that goes back 100

years. Now, Ralph Nader is part of this tradition, but it goes back to La Follette and many others, a kind of toxic combination of mass apathy and domination by moneyed interests which produces inequality and false representation -- nothing new really about that kind of diagnosis.

What is fresh here is that Kevin puts an emphasis on something we don't hear much about which is the restoration of the notion of participatory public virtue. E.J. alluded to this as important, and he is right. To Kevin, participation in politics, not just consent to politics, is an end in itself. It is not just that the system will work better if people participate; it is that the system is better and people become better. The Country becomes better and citizens become better if they participate. He gets this argument all the way back to ancient Athens. The founders are very much involved in it. We drop the ball on this argument in modern America and kudos for Kevin for restoring the lost vocabulary of republican virtue.

His proposals, however, I think show some of the weaknesses of the progressive tradition. For the next five minutes or so, if I emphasize those weaknesses, it is because robust criticism is the way we move forward. But I do have my differences with the book, and I think they show some of the flaws in the progressive tradition. That fundamental flaw for me is this, that is the desire in the progressive tradition to get the politics out of politics and thus progressives' tendency to think apolitically about politics.

For example, Kevin has an idea which he discussed with you. It is a National Assembly which is made up of 100 people in every Congressional District and which ultimately becomes a People's House, citizens' tribunals in his imagining that stand apart from and above ordinary partisan transactional, factional, interested politics.

For instance, just taking two quotes of many, page 113, he says: A new form of participation, the National Assembly would be a representative cross-section of the people as a whole whose existence would fundamentally alter American politics.

Elsewhere on page 149, he refers to the People's House as some place that would take "a highest common concern approach to the public good." He sees this assembly as guided by impartial moderators who will select issues and put forth impartial briefing books and run by a non-partisan expert steering committee. The people on this committee, that is the tribunal, themselves, will also be the people who show up at city hall and town hall meetings as salt of the Earth ordinary people, non-political.

With all due respect to Kevin, I don't think so, not in my world, indeed not on my planet. I am too much a denizen of Washington, D.C. perhaps. In fact, the first thing that is going to happen is you are going to get self-selection by historic partisans, activists, and ideologues. This is the point that Oscar Wilde and E.J. Dionne refer to when they say it takes too many evenings. It is true that the

citizens' councils, the assembly, and so on, you will get your permit by getting a lottery. You will win a lottery in order to be on it. But most people who are busy won't want to be on this thing which takes at least two or three major meetings a week and lots of reading obviously and lots of consultation.

In a very complicated government like what we have, it is pretty obvious to me that this will be a self-selection. The people who are actually on it will be very motivated politicized actors, in other words, many of the same people who are running the parties and running Washington right now, people who love politics, who do it, who have lots of time for it, either because they are right or because they are ideological extremists or because they are professional Republicans and Democrats. I think a lottery can reduce this to some extent by requiring you to win the lottery in order to get the job, but it won't eliminate it. So the result will be that these assemblies may be a little bit less politicized in terms of their composition in the House or in the Senate but perhaps, in my opinion, not all that much.

That said, I think it might, in fact, be quite useful and interesting to have this kind of committee operating as an advisory body, a consultative body, a kind of super focus group. I think that is, in some ways, the most interesting idea in the book. As I understand it, California is trying a version of that.

I would urge Kevin that this should be done privately. It should not be a formal U.S. Federal body because once you put this in the hands of Federal

politicians, you are going to have the agenda for these bodies framed as: Vote yes or no, you -- I think it is -- 35,000 members of the People's Assembly. Do you favor fighting to victory in Iraq or do you prefer surrendering to terrorism?

As we all know from polls, whoever controls the agenda and the question controls the vote. The best way to avoid that is to put this in the hands of non-profits who can come about this. They will have their agenda, but at least they won't be run by the DNC and RNC.

Kevin goes much further, and I make a big distinction between what I just mentioned, a national focus group, and where he goes next which is where I think it does get radical and go off course. He wants to give this national assembly, the People's House, as he calls it, power to legislate, to veto bills, to move out of committees, to directly participate in the business of Congress. Here, the problems are, I think, just legion, but I will mention four of them.

The first is it seems clear to me that very quickly partisanship and factions would emerge on anything that has governing power because the stakes are very high, and these factions would probably mirror, in fact, and potentially amplify the partisan factions that you get in Congress and in the electorate. You will see the farmers and the veterans and the AARP will all have their factions. The Iraq War will split everybody. You will very soon be mirroring, I think, the same kind of interest group politics that you have in Washington.

Second, this kind of body would be a wet dream for lobbyists because it

gives them a whole other bit of the apple. If they don't like what Capitol Hill did, they can come back. They can get a bill reinstated. They can have some schmuck on the Appropriations Committee drop a bill in with no hope of passage and then maybe get the People's House to knock it out of committee, get it to a floor vote, run up lots of campaign contributions. This is a great way to block a gas tax if you don't like what Congress is doing when it is showing leadership -- lobbying city here, potentially.

Third, it might have a bad effect on Congress. This blurs Congressional accountability. Congressmen, with all due respect to the one present, love to pass the buck. This would give them an excuse to say: Well, we will just pass this. We don't really care. We didn't even read it. But we will then let the People's House make the final call on this.

More buck-passing in Washington is not what we need, more subsidies voted out saying, we will let them provide the fiscal discipline down the road. So it might be counter-productive.

Fourth, most important to me, fundamentally, this proposal blurs democratic accountability. Who do you vote out of office if you don't like what the People's House is doing? Well, the answer is nobody. They are there. You are stuck with them. You get another group in two years. But these people are accountable to no one democratically, and I think that is a fundamental flaw. I think, in fact, it is a betrayal of the system. It is not going to fly in America and it

shouldn't.

E.J. thought he would mention later the question of why these folks aren't elected, and I think it is awfully fundamental. In short, the People's House, in my view, will not be insulated from politics, but it will be insulated from political accountability and that, to me, is the worst of both worlds.

The progressive tradition has another flaw which is that it also tends to overlook dynamic forces. Now, this is not a mistake James Madison made. He understood that once you put a governing system in motion, it develops its own institutional momentum, its own constituency. It changes. It changes itself. It changes its surroundings.

One of the things Kevin tries to do, which is admirable, is strictly limit the power of this People's House. I don't think it will work. I think in 10 or 15 years as it acquires legitimacy and power, it will begin to do all kinds of things not envisioned for it. Now, some of those things might be good, but on balance I don't want to set this kind of thing in motion. For example, we know that dynamic forces have tremendously changed Washington and continue to do so. We know that just in the last six years, the number of registered lobbyists in Washington, for example, doubled. You will see this same kind of process, I fear, in the People's House. I think it is important to think about dynamic forces much harder than they are thought about n this book.

My view is that the process is not the problem around here, that the

problem is the problem around here. What is the problem? Quickly, I would identify three levels to focus on.

One is the long-term and secular problem I call demosclerosis. Other people have called it other things. That is the continued accumulation of interest groups in society, subsidies in programs in Washington which once they come onboard can never be gotten rid of and gradually make the Country harder to govern and the government harder to adjust.

Second is a medium-term structural problem, and that is the marginalization of the center in politics, the over-representation of extremes. That is gerrymandering; that is the primary system; that is self-selection of partisans in the process and so forth.

The third problem is short-term and cyclical, and that is what happens when you have on party controlling the whole government in a country where you don't have a majority party.

Well, these are tough problems. There are no shortcuts. I don't think they have much to do with representation or with the size of Congressional Districts.

But there is good news. On the first of these, again what I call demosclerosis, the good news is that America turns out to be, in my opinion, pretty good at dealing with this problem. If pro-competitive reforms are essential, we may get pro-competitive reforms in the Farm Bill which would open the Farm Bill and agriculture to new competition and disempower entrenched lobbying.

We are pretty good at that. We are pretty good at economic growth which helps us grow our way out of the problem. We are open to new technology and ideas. We are open to occasional big reforms -- welfare reform, tax reform. I think there is another one coming pretty soon.

The second point is the missing middle found its voice in 2006. What we learned is that all the gerrymandering in the world is not enough when the middle gets really annoyed. When moderates and independents decide to make up their mind, they move the whole system and move it very dramatically. So we just had a very positive lesson, the fact that although the politicians have dampened responsiveness in the system to the middle, they have not by any means disconnected that responsiveness.

As to the third problem, one party rule of the entire government, enough said. That problem solved as of last week.

Finally, one more piece of good news, and this one I want to emphasize, which is that the United States, for all its flaws in the governing system and the political dialogue and this, that, and the other, is also full of creative, ambitious thinkers who often seem to just come out of nowhere with ideas that are really interesting, that are bracing, that challenge oldtimers like me, that feed new ideas into the system from the outside and start an important public debate and maybe get us thinking in a whole new way about our institutions. I cannot think of a better model of that asset than Kevin O'Leary.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: Those were great presentations. By the way, the current majority that just got voted out of office; Jonathan is the least partisan person I think I have ever met and only the current majority could make him partisan, not because he is a Democrat but because he so desperately wanted divided government. So it is a real achievement of this former majority.

As we were talking, I was thinking why doesn't Kevin call these things, workers and people, Soviets, and we can talk about that or not, but that sounds like a Rush Limbaugh comment, so I withdraw it immediately.

I want to put three questions on the table quickly and then open it up to the audience. The first are some of the question that Jonathan raised. I am also skeptical of chosen by lot and what that actually means, partly because I can think of all sorts of good people who would say: I can't do this. I have very small children. I have to work at night. I coach my kids twice a week. I hate meetings. I am a painter, and I do my other job during the day, and I like to paint at night.

There are many reasons why lots and lots of people would never want to go these meetings, and so choosing by lot seems to me to create some serious problems. That is A.

B, why not elect these folks? I was doing math if you saw me up here. I think my calculation is right. To have 30,000 per representative, we would need

7,500 members of Congress which is actually an interesting idea. It might be an interesting alternative to this. Or you could have districts not drawn by Tom DeLay or Phil Burton of 6,500 people that could elect these representatives. I agree very much with Jonathan that there is a great danger of democratic accountability. If you are only serving two years, you can do a lot of things and then just run away and never be accountable for any of it again unless you did something obviously criminal. I think that is a central issue.

The other thing I wanted to put on the table -– by the way, I salute Jonathan for making the point about participation is an end in itself, and that is at the core of what you have to say -- is Congressman Blumenauer's point on scale. I think there is always a paradox in these discussions which is in some ways what Congressman Blumenauer is saying is that some entities are too big but some entities are too small. In other words, if you want to run a plausible set of policies –- I don't think this has anything to do with ideological loading one way or the other –- you really have to look at the metropolitan area which is, A, as Congressman Blumenauer suggests, cuts across many of the old boundaries including state boundaries but, B, is a very large entity.

I guess I would also throw this back at Congressman Blumenauer: How do you figure out the big and the small? In some ways, we need entities that are bigger and in other ways, we need entities that are smaller, and many of these have to do with local, not Federal, governance. So maybe we should focus on the

local level, not these assemblies for Federal purposes.

I throw all that back at you and to the rest of the panel, and then we will just open it up for discussion.

MR. O'LEARY: Well, thank you very much for your comments.

Let me start with Jonathan because I think you made some good critiques and let me start with the time element on that and, E.J., you brought this up, the whole socialism, Oscar Wilde.

I try to minimize the demand in a sense, but you must have some people involved. Basically, what I am saying is two, three meetings a month, not per week. So that is a big difference in terms of people saying whether they could do it.

On the lot system, I am open. Basically, I am trying to generate a discussion on this idea. The technical details, I am open to. Many minds; in fact, one of the things I quote in the book is the wisdom of crowds. If you have people that look at an issue, often the research shows, they come up with better solutions than a single individual. So I am open to design questions on how to do this. But I do think having people somehow more engaged and giving them an actual say in the system is something we should think about doing, and there might be a way of doing it with elections or by lot.

Now, the time demand, basically, I think people could say, I am not interested in politics. You are going to have 20 or 30 percent of the people to say,

I am not interested in politics, and they don't vote now anyway. Then you are going to have some people who have young children or they are just too busy in their career and they have to pass at that time. If I thought it was only 20 percent that you were going to get to say yes, that is one thing. I think you might get, as people knew about this, coming out of high school, say, maybe some of them want to be a Congressman, but a lot of them are going to say: I don't want to work that hard as a politician. I would like to be involved. Gee, if I knew that at some point when I am 30, 40, 65, I might get this letter saying, hey, it is like jury service. Can you serve two years?

You would actually have say on things. I think you might get 60 to 70 percent of people saying: Yeah, I could do that. I think I will try to make that happen.

Some of them will be really involved, and some of them would be less. I think the jury system shows how when you ask people to do something that they see as a civic duty, they do take it responsibly or at least enough people in that pool do to have leadership and make the thing work.

Let me say on the partisanship issue, I don't want to make it too idealized. I know the progressives were very much trying to get away from politics and yes, it has some connections to that, but I don't expect the people to give up their partisanship at the door. They are going to come in, and you are going to have some people who are very partisan, who are selected; you are going to have other

people who are mildly partisan; and some people are just non-committed.

Actually, I do think on your final points about the marginalization of the center and worries about that with excessive partisanship in the process, I think if you do a large pool of people that you would select by this lot method, you would find a lot of people in the middle who don't go on straight party lines. It might be on abortion one way and economics in another and they don't quite fit in either partisan role. There would be enough people of that type in this mix that, yes, you would have party machinations and people organizing, but people would understand this as being slightly different than the rest of the political system. It would be a novel way of having politics but a little bit less partisan than the regular partisanship which a lot of people would say has been excessive over the last decade or so.

Finally, on Jonathan's work in the past on demosclerosis and Washington growing, actually, I think having a Citizens Assembly and then the People's House is one of the few ways I can think of for countering his problem of interest groups having so much power. Part of what I am doing in this book is saying, look, you had the pluralists and Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom and people in the fifties who wrote about how the system worked coming out of the New Deal. A lot of times, it is interest groups which are narrow factions, if you go back to Madison, driving the process, and then you have all the players in Washington.

When Madison wrote Federalist No. 10 and the other things in the

Federalist Papers, he was after what Samuel (?) at Harvard calls civic majorities. He was trying to get a system where it wasn't just small factions saying this is what we want for our breadbasket, so to speak. He wanted people who were representatives to think about the common good, the broader public good, and that they were disinterested –- this is part of the progressive tradition –- that they were disinterested in the fundamentals of that fight. Party A, Party B, they both have an axe to grind. Madison was trying to create a representative system, so that people would look at the broader horizon and be more honest judges of what to do in a situation like that.

With interest groups now, say, you have an HMO bill. There is going to be a lot of lobbying here in Washington. If the system I am talking about happened, it is free speech and people can lobby away and some business groups are going to be more organized than others. But at the same time, a business group right now, basically, what do they have to do? If it is a subcommittee on their key issue, they have to give key contributions to those folks and maybe it is 7 out of 15, maybe it is 9 out of 15, but they have to make sure and know that they are around, so that a bill that is harmful doesn't get passed. If you had a system like I am talking about, that is a lot of people you have to lobby.

Guess what? If it is an election system chosen by lot, they are not interested in people's money. They will get information, but they are not going to be taking money for a campaign. They don't need it. They are just selected by

lot. They are there. And so, the lobbyists are now going to have to convince a majority of 43,000 Americans who don't have an axe to grind, who aren't set up as lobbyists for the HMO or on the other side of the issue, thinking about something. So I think I have some counter arguments basically to what Jonathan is saying.

Basically, back to the time issue, I think if you want to have a system that works better, that appeals and connects back to our democratic tradition, I think you are going to have to ask some people to have a little more say some of the time.

So I will change to the other folks.

MR. DIONNE: Congressman? I would like you to talk about the Federal-State thing and the scale.

MR. BLUMENAUER: I think what is going on, E.J., is we are seeing, slowly but surely, people are being driven out of necessity to solve problems of air quality on a regional basis. People understand that an airshed does not observe boundaries that were drawn 100 or 200 years ago. They don't observe state boundaries. So we are watching legislation craft water policy. People understand that there are watersheds that are multi-state, again because we stupidly use bodies of water to demark boundaries. You must have Oregon and Washington. You have to engage.

We are starting to find problems of transportation, recognize that there and

recognize that there are trafficsheds, that the behavior for congestion with automobiles is actually quite complex, but you don't solve it by throwing down an arterial. There is nobody that has built their way out of traffic congestion by paving additional lanes.

It has sparked some interesting dynamics. In our community, we have the first popularly elected regional government in the United States that functions as the MPO. They are non-partisan.

MR. DIONNE: That means?

MR. BLUMENAUER: Metropolitan Planning Organization; it actually has bi-state participation on some of the fundamental planning issues. Now, I don't know if we are ahead of our time or goofy. We are still the only one in the United States, but there are models and people come regularly to look at it because it is not working in metropolitan areas around the Country and they are just exploding.

I am seeing the government contracts. Some of these are being done via inter-governmental agreement, not formal boundary adjustments. The people are striking structural change. I participated in one when I was actually a county commissioner generations ago where we negotiated via government contract a reallocation of responsibilities for road and public safety that failed at the ballot box. It was too much of a bite at the ballot box, but we were able to work it out and now it has led too a redefinition between that county and that city. We are being driven that way because nothing else works, and there are lots of ways that

we can just basically go around city and state boundaries.

What Mayor Daley has done in Metropolis 2020 with a business group and his mayor's council, there must be 60 of them in metropolitan Chicago, and good things are happening in that metropolitan area that are amazing.

I started a conference that I continue to work with -- we call it Rail-Volution -- around the Country to talk about transportation innovations, land use, affordable housing, how development works. We were in Chicago last week. People were blown away by what is happening, and it is not formal Federal structure. In some cases, it is to spite that.

Apropos, one thing I had in my notes that I was going to mention in terms of reform is I think we are on the verge of professionalizing election administration in this Country. It is so clear that it cuts both ways. No party benefits by not being able to figure out how many votes were cast. A 15,000 votes shift would have meant 10 House seats one way or the other. After what we have gone through in 2000 and 2004, uh-huh, the public is not there.

One of the things we will do is advance reform, so you get a receipt. You get a receipt for an ATM deposit of $20. You get a receipt for your precious vote. That is going to happen.

My friend, Jim Leach, a tragic loss, no disrespect to my Democratic colleague but Jim Leach is a treasure. Actually, all of you can be part of an effort. We are starting a Draft Jim Leach for U.N. Ambassador. We have a bipartisan

letter that is being circulated. He would get 100 votes.

Jim and I had done a little thing in the *New York Times* a few years ago about the problems with gerrymandering where politicians pick their voters instead of voters picking the politicians. Well, we had positive proof that it cuts both ways. Now, with the stuff that DeLay has unleashed, not only is it going to make it harder to unseat the Democrat that took his position because of the way that DeLay did, and that is why all of the seats fell in suburban Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. There was a good thing in the *Wall Street Journal* about that a couple of days ago. Now, things are at work. If we are going to have continuous redistricting and my Republican friends are thinking about it, the tide going against them. So they could be redistricted into about 100-seat constituencies in the House of Representatives, but that benefits nobody.

I think of professionalizing the elections and having independent commissions. I think you will see virtually every thoughtful governor be campaigning on redistricting reform. These are things we can do right now that can get at some of these items as a result of these tides that Jonathan was talking about.

MR. DIONNE: By the way, I pity the poor Democrat who beat Jim Leach because I have, in the past four days, run into more Democrats who said he was the one guy I didn't want to lose. It was a very good column by my colleague, Mark Shields, on Leach.

Jonathan, do you want to leave it at that?

Who wants to join in?

Sir, could you identify yourself for the sake of everyone?

QUESTIONER: Jim Snyder, Research Director at the New America Foundation. I also write a citizens assembly news digest –- I have been for more than a year –- covering citizens assembly developments throughout the world, especially British Columbia, Ontario, and the Netherlands which have formal citizens assemblies.

Also, in the summer of 2005, New America Foundation had two citizen assemblies events. Two of the people that were there were staffers for Assemblymen Richman and Canciamilla in California. You mentioned ACA 28 which was citizen assembly legislation. It didn't go anywhere this year, but we are hoping there will be an initiative in California pushing a citizens' assembly beginning next year.

My question is there is a specific meaning toward citizen assembly that has now become widespread. I think if you did an internet search, you would find more than 1,000 articles would show up. The citizens' assembly definition there is institutionalized citizens' assembly. The Premiers of British Columbia, Ontario, and the Netherlands have set up these as formal government institutions, randomly selected, generally about 150 people, and then they deliberate for a year and come up with a specific recommendation. You have given the word, citizen

assembly, a very different cast, and I only read the first four chapters but I haven't seen actually any mention of the sort of radical departure that you have taken in using this term. If you could just comment on what you think of the current way the word tends to be used.

I would say the citizens' assemblies all have been set up where elected officials have a direct conflict of interest in instituting a reform. They have all been set up with an elected reform where the feeling is that legislators have a conflict of interest in implementing those. That is in the Netherlands, Ontario, British Columbia. Also, Alberta and Prince Edward Island have tentative plans to move ahead with citizens assemblies. The word has a defined meaning, and you brought it in a new context. If you could just comment on why you have taken that departure.

I would just raise one other question. One incentive problem that wasn't addressed, and there were a lot of valuable ones that were raised, is when you have 43,500 people as part of a legislative assembly and you are asking them to do a tremendous amount of work, two years. I have a general principal that says the larger the body, the less work you get done and the harder it is to be productive. There is a well-known political scientist, Keith Krabill (?), who said that even Congress with 435 members would get nothing done because of free rider problems if it wasn't subdivided into committee where members can get a disproportionate advantage. Here, you have got 43,000 people, and that would be

seem to be a real incentive problem. Those are my two questions.

MR. O'LEARY: Let me deal with the second one first. That is a good point. I think this would evolve. I think Jonathan's points about dynamics. You would have to worry about which direction things might go.

On your point in terms of committee, I think you could have a situation where different local citizens assemblies could decide to specialize in some issue. Basically, to your first point, the idea of having citizen assemblies look at a specific proposal, Robert Dahl talks about this more than 15 years ago. It is like his idea of a grand jury. You can have one specific thing, whether it is metropolitan areas that you talked about today or any public policy issue, and you pick this group of people and say: Go study it; come back in two years and give us a White Paper.

Well, I expand on that and say let us do multiple issues versus Jim Fishkin who has done a lot of work on deliberative polling for a long time. He was at Yale when Dahl was there and I was there as well. His thing -– I am different from him –- Fishkin's idea is that you have people fly to Austin, Texas, where he used to teach. Now, he is at Stanford. You have them there for the weekend. He has done this thing in Britain where he has actually done it. You bring people together, and they are there for three days, and you pay them, and they work on whatever issue it is, and then they go home, and it is over. So mine is different by saying: Why can't you have a town hall structure ongoing and multiple issues?

Now, both panelists and your question say: How will they deal with all these complex matters? How will they have the time?

Who would be the brains of this? Let me just address that briefly. I would suggest having an executive committee coming out of, emerging from the citizens' assembly. Say, Dorothy is on the citizens' assembly, and everybody thinks she is crackerjack and first-rate and very ethical. Maybe she is nominated. In each local assembly, the same thing occurs, and you have 50 people emerge that were seen as stellar. They have formed this national executive committee that serves for another two years. They pick the issues that make the most sense. They have gone through the process. They know the time demands. They say: We are not going to deal with every issue that Congress is trying to deal with. We think there are maybe three or four issues for the next 24 months that we should look at. Which districts would be interested in specializing?

So you could end up with a committee structure in terms of they are a focus group of public opinion that is focused and trying to have a little bit more knowledge than average citizens about an issue.

MR. DIONNE: Before we go on, Congressman Blumenauer, these are complicated times in the Congress. There is a lame duck session, not to mention a whole lot of other things going on, and he has to go. So I invited him to say a last word before he has to leave.

It was really good of you to come in this very interesting and difficult week.

MR. BLUMENAUER: I appreciate the invitation. I always like what goes on here. I do find myself being challenged both in terms of this notion of scale, other structures, and dealing with some of the provocative things that Jonathan was talking. This is really important because we can't keep going quite the way that we are. We are not going to keep going quite the way we are. It is open, I think, in terms of some of the incremental changes that are going to take place.

I thought this was just a lot of fun to think about. I found the exchange very valuable, and I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: Who has the mic?

QUESTIONER: My name is Tim Downs, and I have no pedigree of anything.

MR. DIONNE: You are a citizen. You are a citizen assemblyman.

QUESTIONER: I am a citizen assemblyman.

My question is based on my experience with the ANCs here in Washington. I am afraid I am going to date myself here. In the early sixties, I had some involvement with the Model Neighborhood Program and particularly the Citizens Councils. The observation that I have noticed in both environments is that an ongoing organization as opposed to a single issue, special issue committee, an ongoing organization seems successful when it is first, dealing with issues that

they know about on a local basis, and secondly, that their conclusions have some material immediate effect.

Now, in the ANC, for example, I believe the statutes creating it say that they are not binding. They are advisory by definition. However, their conclusions are to be given great weight. In the Model Neighborhood Program, I remember the big fight was between whether the citizens group had the power to overrule or not, and a similar kind of compromise was worked out.

What I have heard described today, particularly in terms of the citizens' councils, is something that seems a bit inconsistent with this real world experience that I have had. Now, my experience is much more limited than the panel's is, but I would like to have some discussion as to why we should believe that this proposal would be effective when dealing with issues that are very, very broad in scope and that are not of the immediate local interest, one, and secondly, because of the broadness and the generality of the issues would probably not have an immediate effect, whatever the conclusions were of the groups.

MR. DIONNE: You know about ANCs. They are Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners in each ward. Is it three per ward? How many are there per ward?

QUESTIONER: I think there are seven.

MR. DIONNE: Seven per ward, so there are city council members, eight wards. There are city council members from the wards plus city council members

elected at large. The ANCs are elected from neighborhoods, basically. They are genuine neighborhood commissioners.

QUESTIONER: (off mike)

MR. DIONNE: They are only rarely, in my experience, competitive elections or sometimes they are. Often, the one person who wants to do it is the only name on the ballot, but occasionally, there are local fights over local issues and you have fights over ANC commissioners. The gentleman described the rest pretty well, very well, that they are advisory but they do have an influence. Because of their legal existence, they certainly have the power to create a stink if they are ignored.

Your question, could you focus that question? I think it is a good metaphor for this.

QUESTIONER: Yes; my question is in my limited experience, I have found that groups such as ANCs and the Model Neighborhood Organizations are successful in one, perpetuating their existence, and two, keeping interest because their jurisdiction of inquiry is limited to local matters, and because it is local matters, their recommendations have some real impact. This seems to be a distinction between the breadth and the mechanism of operation that you are suggesting.

MR. O'LEARY: It does go against that. Part of the reason would be if you go back in political philosophy, and you look at de Tocqueville or John Stuart

Mill, and they talk about local involvement. So we have got lots of local involvement in the U.S. and neighborhood councils are an example. Los Angeles has instituted them now.

The question is incentive. That is a good one. You wouldn't have immediate feedback, but at the same time, these are like the big national issues that drove this election a week ago, the national election, the biggest issues in the Country that people are concerned about. A lot of times, I think there are some people who really like local politics and want to be involved. Other people look at cities, and this is what the Congressman was talking about. School districts and cities are important but they are limited in terms of big issues that really affect everybody. What if we want to plug into the bigger issues that affect us at the state level or the national level? I think there would be interest in those kinds of macro issues.

Whether the incentives would work long-term, I don't know. You could have a situation where you break it up and you just do single issues, but I am saying: What if you try it differently? What if you have ongoing and multiple issues?

It is interesting; in the introduction, I quote a conversation between Thomas Friedman and Tim Russert before the Iraq invasion. Friedman basically said, look, a hundred people in this town decided to go to war. That was a pretty big decision, and we are living with the ramifications ever since. Yes, there was lots

of talk, but did the public really grapple? Did the public really understand that Saddam was not connected to Al-Qaeda even though E.J.'s newspapers and all the big national journalists were writing about it? If you looked at those reports, people who kept up with the news knew there wasn't a connection, but it had been spun by the White House that there might be a connection. So a lot of people bought that.

If you had a citizens' assembly structure, they might have come up with a deliberative poll that says: Wait a second; we don't think there is a real connection with Saddam. Are you really sure you want to do this? Maybe the French aren't stupid after all when they are being harassed about French fries in the House. The French understand that Saddam is a check on the Shiites. What happens if Saddam is gone?

On some questions, right now, what do we have in the system?

MR. DIONNE: Let me ask you a question on that because that was the question that was floating around in my head.

I am not at all sure in any way that the existence of these citizens' assemblies in the climate of 2002-2003 would have made any difference at all in the way the Iraq War came out, nor am I persuaded. In a way, Iraq is unfair to you because it may be one of those problems that has no good solution at this moment. I am not entirely sure what difference they make compared to, say, having a free election where the voters expressed their unease about the direction

that this was going and then kicked it back to Washington and said: This ain't working. Try again.

I don't think that narrow issue of whether people thought there was a connection to 9-11 or not and what ended up being decisive in our going to war. So what actual difference could this make on an issue like Iraq?

MR. O'LEARY: Well, let us try a different issue then.

MR. DIONNE: No, no, no, I want you to try Iraq.

MR. O'LEARY: Do you want to try Iraq?

MR. DIONNE: Yes.

MR. O'LEARY: Well, on Iraq, if you had some people who actually knew where Iraq was and knew some of the ethnic difficulties and they read some of the reports, say, James Fallows' reports, they might have raised some more questions and there might have been a little bit more pressure on the President and the Defense Department to talk about what the strategy is going to be and where we are going to go versus just stay the course.

MR. DIONNE: In your defense, one thing that I think would happen is minority viewpoints would get a better representation in this, ranging from Libertarian to Socialist, people willing to say things on Iraq because they didn't have a vested interest in elections. I think it is quite possible that these would at least broaden the conversation. I think that is one potential advantage.

MR. O'LEARY: Right; think about one other big issue, famously, the

Clinton healthcare plan. What if the citizens' assembly structure was involved at that time? Actually, that is interesting because Congress passed, Senator Wyden and Hatch passed a bill about healthcare just focusing on that, saying the next time around, we should really do something grassroots to try to find out the public perception and try to educate people about what we are trying to do before it happens. If you think about the outcome of it and you look, Fallows had a nice article in the *Atlantic Monthly* afterwards, saying: Look, any big legislation like this is complicated, but did people really understand and what was it decided on?

It was decided partially on the ads run by the health companies and people that wanted to keep the system the same way. They had the old couple on the porch, talking: Oh, it is a government plan. This is crazy. Don't do it.

You might have had a little higher level of conversation.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

Jonathan, do you want to comment on any of this?

MR. RAUCH: I do, but so many people out there haven't had time and I am reluctant.

MR. DIONNE: All right, well, you come back on the next round.

Let us go to a couple of folks. We have two voices there in the back, the lady way in the back and then the gentleman over here.

By the way, I was thinking that this is semi-pro government. There is something to be said for that, halfway between amateur and the majors.

QUESTIONER: Hi, I am Sarah at Brookings.

Just based on this discussion, it seems that a citizens' assembly would serve as a check of our legislative body which to me would indicate a shift away from trusting the ability of our legislative body. Instead of maybe creating a citizens assembly, it seems that we should create a system of further accountability of our legislative body. So I propose we have more of an open dialogue with our Representatives and our Senators. That seems to be where there is this disconnect in the constituents not being able to get their voices heard. Is it maybe that they are not having a dialogue? I was wondering if you could speak to that.

MR. O'LEARY: I think that is true, but I remember talking to a legislator in California a couple weeks ago, and he was saying: Well, I have got my BlackBerry. I am very connected with everybody.

The politicians, they are really hooked in. They feel bombarded by everything. But it is more the felt sense by us partially because the districts are so massive. Yes, you would want to have more accountability but would that be enough? That is why I offer my suggestion. I don't think accountability is the only thing you want in this situation.

QUESTIONER: I just wanted to follow up a little bit. I am sorry.

It seems that it is our legislative body's responsibility to be aware of the issues, and so I think that is something that we should really try and move towards. Talking about the differences in Iraq and all the issues that come up

there, regional and tribal strife, that is something that they should really be responsible for understanding.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

Now to the gentleman over here, and then I want to hear from my friend, Jonathan.

No, no, no, right there, and then it is coming to you. I am just moving the mic up.

QUESTIONER: My name is Damien Kudelga (?). I am a Master's student of Public Policy at Georgetown, so I see Professor Dionne every so often.

Mr. O'Leary, first I just want to thank you for writing and exercising leadership in putting forth this to the national debate. As we all know, the founders were considered radicals or in Professor Dionne's words, this idea is unconventional as the founders were. I think you are in good company. I think we should keep pushing forward ideas for discussion.

I have plenty of questions, but I will keep it to one. You mentioned that I think it was in 1911, there was an increase in the House of Reps, I believe in the House, from I don't know what number but to our current Representatives' number. You talked a lot about Greece, and many of us may know they had thousands of reps.

I was just curious. I guess there must have been a lot of debate at that point in time, in 1911. Oh, increasing to 435. Oh, how are we going to get anything

done? How is this going to work? All the naysayers; and I am sure there was a large discussion. We are here now in 2006 and everything is working well.

So I am curious about how much research and what body of research you looked at and your thoughts, maybe even a combination. If we did increase once again, what would happen, from 435 to quadrupling or whatever the number would be?

MR. DIONNE: There are 646 members of the House of Commons -– I think that is the right number –- in Britain. I am really glad he asked that question because I would like you to go through that history. It does seem to me that if scale is the problem, the solution may include increasing the size of the House which I doubt would be popular actually.

QUESTIONER: Oh, I doubt, but I doubt it was popular back in 1911 as well.

MR. DIONNE: Please do talk about that because I do think you are dead right to raise this. That is one of the reasons I am glad you raised all these issues because scale is a big deal right now. It is even worse in the California Legislature.

MR. O'LEARY: Yes, you are right. In the State Senate in California, there are 40 members, so they have districts of 800,000 as of 2000. They are going to hit a million quickly.

MR. DIONNE: I guess that is small potatoes compared to the Senate.

MR. O'LEARY: Right; if you took 435 and you went up to 600, you could do that. The one thing I have noted, if you read the literature on the Senate versus the House, the Senate has a much different structure and works much differently with looser rules because you have 100 people. Johnson famously in the Caro book goes and looks at the Senate and says: Oh, this is great. This is perfect for me. I can do exactly what I want in the Senate.

The House, in contrast, has many more rules, shorter times for people to speak, and given the way Congress works now, our people are flying back to their districts. They are not around as much. The Ornstein-Mann book talk about people just aren't here that much. They are back and forth.

At some point, you are going to get the House so big that it doesn't work as well as it does now. You are just going to have the committees where people get to know each other which is important for legislation to get done. So I think at some point, there is a maximum to how big you can build the House of Representatives. I will leave it there.

MR. DIONNE: What was the debate? Just briefly, what was the debate back in 1911? Was there much?

MR. O'LEARY: I don't know how much. I don't really know how much debate was going on. I just know that was the last time that they increased the size and that since then, we have basically stuck with it. I think it would be interesting to look and to try to find out.

QUESTIONER: I am not entirely sure exactly what the debate was.

MR. DIONNE: What was it increased from?

MR. O'LEARY: I don't know what the number was. I just know that was the number we got to and we have stuck with it for, gosh, it is almost 100 years now.

MR. DIONNE: Well, we kept adding when we added states.

QUESTIONER: That could be our next book. There you go, exactly.

MR. DIONNE: We need to do some research.

QUESTIONER: This is Antonio.

Since we are talking about saving democracy, I wonder if I can ask you to focus a bit on the state level. You mentioned very briefly the state level.

A month ago, I was invited to attend a seminar at the Institute of Medicine. The seminar was on stem cell research, and the highlight of the day was a medical scientist from California who explained to us how California went about the process of deciding that they would negotiate and put up a certain amount of money over a 10-year period to sponsor stem cell research in California. It seems to me that it was an extraordinary commission of people in California, including a contract with the state and the people which will give the people a certain part of any income that should derive from the success of this stem cell research. It seems to me here was a model that Donna Shalala says is going to change in extraordinary ways what is going to happen in the Nation, that whenever the

Federal Government gets tied up on, say, medical issues, that states are going to start doing their own thing. I just wonder if you would comment.

The California experience seems to me to be extraordinary because it included ordinary people, the state government, the governor, the medical scientists, and lot of encumbrances. I wonder if you could speak to that.

MR. O'LEARY: Yes, I think that is a movement. You see that ever since the sixties with the push for participatory democracy, there has been a push to try to have citizen involvement. And so, on a lot of single issues like that, legislators will say, gee, we have got the experts, so let us have some citizen involvement as well, and that is great. It helps the process move along.

In terms of states, I think for what I am proposing, it would obviously happen at a state level first. If something like a citizens' assembly was to happen, a reform-minded governor or a state with an initiative process, that is how it would get launched. Then you would have to see how it would go and you would experiment there before you would ever go to the Federal level because that is how reform happens in the U.S. with our Federal system which is nice.

MR. DIONNE: The wise but so far relatively silent Jonathan Rauch, I want to come back to him.

MR. RAUCH: You still have more questions out there. Are you sure you don’t want to go to them?

MR. DIONNE: That is okay. Let us go to you.

MR. RAUCH: Well, I am just casting my mind over the acres and acres of difference between how Kevin thinks this will work and how I think it will work. Here is how it works on Planet Rauch.

There is a five-minute sign going up back there, so I will make this quick.

MR. DIONNE: It is 3:45, right? We have a little bit of time.

MR. BLUMENAUER: In that case, I will try to make this my summary remark.

MR. DIONNE: Yes, but we have a little bit of time.

MR. RAUCH: On Planet Rauch, it seems to me the two critical words missing from Kevin O'Leary's calculus are Karl Rove. The people who think about politics will look at this quite differently from the people who look at this on paper.

The first thing that is going to happen is in, say, a district, a Congressional district, you are going to get 400 people and the first 100 people will be chosen by lot. Well, let us say only 30 people can do this because they have got kids and three meetings a week plus a whole bunch of reading plus a whole lot of talking and internet is a whole lot. Most people just don't have time.

So which people are going to do this? Well, Karl Rove and the Republican National Committee are immediately going to hit the phones to make sure that their Republican contacts get pestered to death until they agree to be on those panels. Moderate and independents will not get the same treatment. The parties

will make darn sure they are heavily and over-represented on these panels because everything will depend on it.

The next thing that happens is the panel convenes. Who gets to lead the panel and who gets to steer it? Well, there is going to be a question about that. In a Republican district, I am just going to guess that a Republican is going to be selected to run the committee and it is going to be a partisan Republican.

What does the committee then want to talk about? At the national level, you will have a steering committee with the same kind of dynamic. But at the local committee, I am going to say if it is 2004, for example, the Republican assembly groups or whatever the district groups are going to say: Let us talk about terrorism. Terrorism is the issue we can focus on. We don't have time to do everything. It is going to be terrorism. The Democrats are going to say: The most important issue to talk about right now is healthcare.

Level after level, what you see happening here, folks, is simple replication at one level down of all the dysfunctions and functions –- this is politics –- in Washington.

I guess where I would leave this is a fundamental disagreement between Kevin and me over whether you can or even should try to conceive of any kind of group in American society that is somehow immune to politics. I think it will never work. It should never even be tried, fundamentally. We need to count on the political process infecting every layer of politics and work within that model.

MR. O'LEARY: Let me just respond.

MR. DIONNE: According to Planet O'Leary.

MR. O'LEARY: You probably like then the Fishkin-Ackerman book, *Deliberation Day*, where they propose moving a national holiday to basically three weeks before the election and having everybody participate. My proposal looks very practical and inexpensive and easy to do versus theirs. They want everybody to participate every four years right at the end of the Presidential campaign, and it will take two days to do it because you must have the healthcare workers and the police and whomever else. So you are having two days of economic loss, everybody participates, and then they go off after this. It just happens once.

I thought about Karl Rove and James Carville with this. What would they do with something like that? It is just going to be part of the election season exactly.

My system, the way I am proposing it, is insulated a bit but not totally. Yes, the parties would work and everybody who is a political operative would look at this and lobbyists would try to take advantage of it. Basically, do you want to keep a system the way it is where you have a limited, very small group of people who are elected running public policy or do you want to try to bring the public in with this idea of a focus group?

Maybe it could be structured so it is more partisan and accepts the political

divide that we have. But I also think if you structure it right on how you select these people or how they are chosen, you will get some people who are the folks in the middle and not just the partisans on the side.

MR. DIONNE: I am going to bring in everybody who wants to get in, so we can shut it down.

I can't resist. You don't have to do it, Louis, but my friend, Louis Caldera has had more experience at every level of government. He has been President of the University of Mexico, an Army Secretary, and a State Legislator in California. So I can't resist asking him if he chooses to, but he can decline to be in the jury pool and to react to all of this.

But let me try Gary Mitchell first and this gentleman over here and the lady over there, if you could all just make brief comments or questions, and then we will close the panel down.

QUESTIONER: Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report.

What is happening here for me is we have been having this wonderful sort of right brain discussion that has pushed me to the left side. It goes like this: One of the ways to describe this, he said, not having read the book but attended the panel, is this is a classic case of thinking outside the box. As more than one person has observed, if we are all thinking outside the box, something must be wrong with the box.

So my question is rhetorical. I mean I really don't need a response. My

question is whether this discussion is taking place at the right level. It has essentially been a discussion about tactics, about whether it is 100 per district and whether they meet twice a week or three times a week, et cetera. What you have proposed here is a tactical solution.

My question is: Have we defined what the really strategic objective is or objectives are? What is wrong with the box and what are our key objectives here? The only way you can really intelligently analyze a set of tactical recommendations is by looking back at the objectives, looking back at the strategic component that you said at the outset that you were trying to fix. It seems to me that one of the reasons that this conversation is having some difficulty –- it is a very interesting one but having some difficulty –- is because there is a lot. Everybody is an artist. Everybody is a tactician.

The question for me is whether it is today or in a future conversation, whether we need to move back upstream and define with more clarity the strategic objectives that we are after that would define what is wrong with the box and what our strategic options are.

MR. DIONNE: That is a great question. Hold that thought.

This gentleman over here?

QUESTIONER: Hi, my name is Pavneet Singh, and I recently moved to D.C. from California.

The reason I bring that up is because California and the San Francisco Bay

area is a technological haven. As I was reading the description of this event today, I saw a lot of emphasis on the internet as a tool to increase representation. I was wondering; you haven't mentioned so much how exactly in the trenches, the internet would enhance representation.

I was doing the simple math and supposing that there is a 650,000-person district and 100 people serve on an assembly; that is still about a hundredth of a percent per person representation. So in the trenches, how does technology really bring people to the fold and increase our representation and dialogue? Thanks.

MR. DIONNE: Then the lady back here next to Louis, was it your hand up, ma'am?

QUESTIONER: Katharine Kravitz, American University.

When I came here this afternoon, I was attracted by the civic engagement side of it rather than the representational government. When you were talking, I was thinking in terms of jury duty, I guess, and that a lot of people in the trenches, I think, feel or they know the system does not work. This goes to your point where they feel the system isn't working. But I think people want to participate. They don't want to feel that they have been taken over by the powers that be, even if they are, and one way they do that is in other segments of the system. I think people want a sense that they have a certain power, but I am not sure they can get that power through the straight political process because that process just by nature is really different.

But when you have them, say, trying a particular issue, they deliberate, they debate, they become educated, and they usually make pretty decent decisions. I wonder if there is a better model for civic engagement, not worrying about how it so much affects the political process but how it brings people more into our system and feeling more involved in the system that we have.

MR. DIONNE: Louis, you are off the hook if you want, but I would love to have you come in.

MR. CALDERA: I think it is an intriguing conversation. First of all, I think there is a way to say, well, let us try it on a voluntary basis. Let any member of Congress decide to do this and listen more carefully to the people who are their constituents. I think that is a noble effort to be better in touch with people you represent. But how that group gets selected, et cetera, and how they do their deliberation, you have to mindful of the time commitments.

Most elected officials can't meet with everybody who wants to meet with them. They are dealing with legislative issues that are constantly changing because language is changing. All the lobbyists and different groups who are trying to get in your door and talk to you about different things. You can't replicate that. As an elected official who does it full-time, you can't meet with everybody who wants to meet with you. Certainly, these 100 people have even less of an opportunity to listen if someone thinks they have a voice and is going to want to reach them to make sure they are educated on the issues and that they are

looking at all the different rationale and perspectives and arguments.

What ends up happening is the elected officials end up thinking: You have an opinion. That is nice. I am going to listen to you, but you are at the superficial level and I am down here ten levels lower in terms of understanding this issue and what I have to factor in before I vote on it -- that is if they are really trying to make an informed decision and not just going with who their supporters are.

I think that starts to break down if you are really expecting people to make those educated decisions at that kind of citizen level. I don't think you are going to get good public policy because you are not going to get a really strong understanding of what the variables are and what the issues are.

Improving the level of communication, being in touch with people -- I think I would write it as the public good -- that is my basis for selecting these 100 people. I want people for whom that is their goal. Yes, you will help me reflect the values of our community, and you will listen thoughtfully, and I will meet with you from time to time or hear from time to time what you have to say, but I certainly don't expect you to be down there in the weeds about different legislative proposals and telling me how to shape them, which are the good ones and which are the bad ones.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. If there is a political consultant in the room, that would be a great promise: I am going to convene a citizen assembly. If you elect people like me to Congress, then I am going to listen to you.

But anyway, it is a really interesting way to look at it.

To close, I am going to ask our two gentlemen here. Actually, Jonathan, why don't you offer a last thought, and then I will have Kevin close the panel?

MR. RAUCH: My last thought is Kevin should close the panel.

MR. DIONNE: See, we are already delegating. That is the problem with these citizen assemblies.

MR. O'LEARY: Right, right; let me just close personally by responding to these good questions.

On the strategy issue, basically, on the back of the book, I say that I am trying to find a way to bridge the enormous gap that exists between the political elite and the average citizens. Then that goes to the last comment about being an elected official and seeing all the complexity.

Basically, we can make a choice. We can say, yes, we can have citizens assemblies the way they are, we can have a little bit of an advisory committee, or I am proposing going against the grain of what you are saying; that is on some issues, it would be nice to have a set of public opinion where people have looked at it in a little bit more detail, not the detail that the staff or the elected officials have but understand the basic choices on a big transportation plan for a state or on HMO reform in Congress.

I think that would be useful to the public dialogue because the politicians and journalists and regular public would look at these people and say, well, you

actually sat down. It wasn't like the initiative system in California where you got the ballot, you look at the arguments, and you see the ads. It would be more than that.

The point about the internet; the internet is basically to tie the thing together. People that know a lot about the internet could find fabulous ways to make the whole thing work in terms of a national system, but it is basically a communication device. I am not going into much more than that in the book.

On the effect, when you say, oh, if we only had 100 people and there are 650,000, yes, it seems like a small amount, but 100 people over time and the degree of felt separation, many more people after a decade, say, would know a friend of a friend or a neighbor or a relative that had served on one of these local panels, whether it is in their own district or somewhere else. All of a sudden, that would have a very good effect on the idea of your comment on what would be the effect outside of politics.

It is like social capital that Putnam talks about. This would have an effect both on the political capital of people having more knowledge about politics, that gradually you get a little bit of increase in what we are doing.

Now, one of the points in the book is -– this will be my close –- how we practice democracy wouldn't matter so much if we aren't the United States. If we are Latvia or Sweden or Chile, nothing against those countries, it doesn't matter as much. But given that we are the superpower and one of the dominant countries

in terms of economics, how we do practice democracy means a whole lot because our decisions have consequences here and abroad. If we want to do a good job and we take our responsibility seriously, we may not want to just say we will let the guardians that are elected in the state capitals and in D.C. run the show. Maybe we could be a little bit more involved in an intelligent way.

Thank you very much.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you all very, very much.

(Applause)

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