

Democratic Dreams

July 18, 2019

On Wednesday, I said we should, to borrow the vernacular, “have a conversation” about a national referendum.

Billionaire investor, environmentalist, and Democratic presidential candidate Tom Steyer proposed the idea, which I’ve loved conceptually since my friend, former Alaska Sen. Mike Gravel (also a Democratic presidential candidate), first advocated it decades ago.

But that ol’ devil — he’s in the details. (Decidedly *not* the latest lingo.) What might a national initiative and/or referendum process look like?

If U.S. Term Limits is successful in getting 34 states to call a convention to propose an amendment for congressional term limits, a national referendum process could follow in those footsteps.

Given that it would require a constitutional amendment — meaning ratification by 38 of the 50 states — the process must win broad support to be enacted.

Here’s what I propose: Allow any statutory initiative measure to be petitioned onto a



federal General Election ballot with signatures equaling 6 or 8 percent of the country’s population* and as verified by election officials in each state. Require a concurrent majority, whereby for a measure to pass it must garner not only a majority of the vote nationally, but also a majority vote in at least 20 states — or even in a majority of the states.

An initiative proposing a national constitutional amendment should do more. Require, say, a petition signature threshold of 10 or 15 percent and not merely a majority of the vote nationally to pass, but mirroring the current amendment process, mandate a majority in each of at least 38 states.

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Talk about two ideas that will pop blood vessels in the heads of professional politicians and their special interest cronies!

Dare to dream.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

* This should simply follow the figures of the most recent census, of course.