

## Democracy vs. Republic

by Paul Quillen  
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Our founding fathers feared democracy as a tyrannical and evil form of government and were very careful not to form a democracy. They formed a constitutional republic.

This is not semantics.

The word "democracy" is not found in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, or in the Pledge of Allegiance.

"What did you give us?" Mrs. Elizabeth Willing Powel of Philadelphia asked Ben Franklin as he was leaving the Constitutional Convention. "We have given you a Republic. It remains to be seen if you will be able to retain it." he replied.

"Democracy is the vilest form of government there is" commented Thomas Paine, the author of *Common Sense*.

James Madison wrote in *Federalist Paper #10*: "Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention... and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths." and "Democracies have ever been found to be incompatible with personal security or the rights of property." In a Democracy the majority using raw power can crush the rights of minorities. Emotional swings lead to destructive, impulsive government actions. (James Madison warned about this in *Federalist No. 10*.)

John Adams said: "Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself."

The Pledge of Allegiance says: "...and to the Republic for which it stands..."

Probably the best summary on the subject of republic vs. democracy is in the *Soldier's Training Manual* issued by the United States War Department in 1928:

"Democracy : A government of the masses. Authority is derived through mass meeting or any other form of direct expression. Results in Mobocracy. Attitude toward property is communistic -- negating property rights. Attitude towards law is that the will of the majority shall regulate, whether it is based on deliberation or governed by passion, prejudice, and

impulse, without restraint or regard to consequences. Results in demagogism, license, agitation, discontent, anarchy.

Republic: Authority is derived through the election by the people of public officials best fitted to represent them. Attitude towards property is respect for laws and individual rights, and a sensible economic procedure. Attitude towards law is the administration of justice in accord with fixed principles and established evidence, with a strict regard to consequences. A greater number of citizens and extent of territory may be brought within its compass. Avoids the dangerous extreme of either tyranny or mobocracy. Results in statesmanship, liberty, reason, justice, contentment and progress."

Francis Bellamy, who wrote the original Pledge of Allegiance in 1892, chose his words carefully. At that time, Americans still made a clear distinction between "republic" and "democracy." Even in 1892, democracy had slightly negative connotations — people feared mob rule or emotional swings in public opinion. Bellamy deliberately honored the Founders' original intent by calling it a "republic," matching exactly what Madison, Adams, Hamilton, and Washington wanted.

Simply stated, democracy is majority rule with no rights for the minority of voters. Majority rule is mob rule. For example, 51% could vote to take the property of the other 49%. This would be an example of legalized theft, such as the 51% taxing the 49% and the 51% receiving the money as an entitlement.

Republic is rule by elected representatives within the constraints of the Constitution. The Constitution provides legal boundaries and protects the rights of the minority voters from the majority voters. It also protects the rights of the individual from his own government (for example, the second amendment).

Our national government is fast leaving republic and approaching democracy and is advocating evil democracy throughout the world.

Republic only works with a God-fearing, moral, law-abiding people.

Democracy is still democracy. Republic is still republic. The word democracy does not now mean republic. The distinction, if anything, is now clearer than ever. They are not the same and the words cannot be used interchangeably.

**DEMOCRACY:** A dictatorship of the majority created by conducting a popularity contest between stooges representing competing special-interest factions.

"A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves money from the public treasury. From that moment on the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury with the result that the democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy always followed by dictatorship. The average age of the world's greatest civilization has been 200 years. These nations have progressed through the following sequence:  
from bondage to spiritual faith;  
from spiritual faith to great courage;  
from courage to liberty;  
from liberty to abundance;  
from abundance to selfishness;  
from selfishness to complacency;  
from complacency to apathy;  
from apathy to dependency;  
from dependency back into bondage."

*The Decline and Fall of the Athenian Republic*  
(A 1700's book about the Greek Democracy.)  
by Alexander Fraser Tytle

Plato asserted in his monumental work "Republic" that democracy was the worst possible form of government, because the populace did not have enough specialized knowledge to make judgments. The best governance, according to Plato, comes from those who have specific knowledge of the field of governing. An analog of this is why we go to doctors. When one is ill, one does not take an opinion poll on what the best treatment should be. One instead goes to someone with specialized knowledge...a doctor. When one is lost at sea, a vote among the sailors as to which direction to go is hardly the most appealing option. Far wiser is to ask someone trained in the art of direction-finding.... that is, a navigator. In the case of governance, the person skilled in the art of running a state was called a Philosopher-King...that is, someone who was vested with absolute power, but someone who also knew to use it wisely.... to do what is right. Plato predicted that democratic governments eventually descend into chaos.

[I recommend the Allan Bloom translation of "Republic" for those who want fuller details on this paradigm, known as "The Ship of State."]

**Do We Want Democracy?**  
**By Professor Walter E. Williams**  
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What's so good about democracy, generally understood as having

trust in the general will of a democratic people, as expressed by a vote of the majority, to make all important decisions? If a majority of our 535 congressmen votes for one measure or another, is that alright with you? You say, "What's the story, Williams? Is there a better method of making important decisions?" I say yes but let's first decide whether we'd really like majority rule as a criterion for making important decisions.

Suppose you're making the important decision to marry. Would you like the decision about whom you marry to be made through a democratic procedure where what the majority of Americans think determines who you marry? How about using the democratic process to decide what we have for Thanksgiving dinner? Majority rule determines whether everyone has turkey, or ham, or duck, or capon. Once the vote is taken and say turkey wins, everyone is obliged to serve turkey.

You say, "C'mon Williams, when people say they're for democracy, they don't mean private decisions!" You're probably right. Indeed if democratic procedures were applied to those private areas of our lives, we'd see it as nothing less than tyranny. That's one important problem with democracy: it creates an aura of moral legitimacy for acts that would otherwise be considered tyranny. That's precisely why our Founders thought a Bill of Rights as a crucial protection. Thomas Jefferson said, "The majority, oppressing an individual, is guilty of a crime, abuses its strength, and by acting on the law of the strongest breaks up the foundations of society." So we should ask what life decisions should and should not be made through the political process.

Should a democratic process determine how much I put aside out of my weekly earnings for food? What about housing? What about for my daughter's education? You say, "Williams, that's your business and none other." Then I ask why isn't it also my business how much of my weekly earnings is set aside for retirement? In our country how much is set aside for retirement is, as Jefferson might put it, criminally determined by Congress through Social Security laws.

Democracy was viewed with disgust by most of the nation's founders. Alexander Hamilton said, "We are now forming a Republican form of government. Real liberty is not found in the extremes of democracy, but in moderate governments. If we incline too much to democracy, we shall soon shoot into a monarchy, or some other form of dictatorship." In Federalist Paper 10, arguing for a constitutional republic, James Madison said, "...democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths." John Adams said, "Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts,

and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide." U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall said, "Between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos." The observation about democracy that I like best was that of H.L. Mencken, "Democracy is a form of worship. It is the worship of jackals by jackasses."

When the Founders thought of democracy, they saw democracy in the political sphere - a sphere strictly limited by the Constitution's well-defined and enumerated powers given the federal government. Substituting democratic decision making for what should be private decision making is nothing less than tyranny dressed up.

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