



# **WELCOME TO THE PRESERVING DEMOCRACY COALITION GENERAL MEETING!**

We're glad you are here.



**Yep, It's a Constitutional "Break Glass Moment"  
and  
We're the Responders**

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



“The question is whether there’s anything behind the glass to counter the emergency.” (Jackie Calmes, Los Angeles Times opinion piece, February 27, 2025)

- Congress? (Keepers of the ultimate break-glass scenarios)
- Federal Courts?
- The “4<sup>th</sup> Branch” (a free press)?

As Calmes writes, “This leaves one last class of first responders: *American voters*. The backlash has begun, at lawmakers’ town halls and over Congress’ phone lines.”

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



As Barack Obama once said as a candidate:

**WE ARE THE ONES WE’VE BEEN WAITING FOR**

(This is where we come in.)

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



As the “first responders” what should we ***do***?

The ways in which each of us voters answer that question may depend on how we have “identified” party-wise, but the core DNA of the PDC is that *regardless of your political “identity” you are a welcome ally in our fight to preserve (and perhaps rebuild) our democracy.*

We believe there is a common ground big enough to hold us all and, in fact, it is in recognizing that common ground that we will succeed.

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



What do I mean?

- Our current political system is basically a 2-party one
- When you came through the door tonight it is likely you already “identified” with one of the two dominant parties
- If I had a time machine...

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



How do we make a 2-dominant party system work for *everyone*?

(Spoiler alert: by using the blueprint laid out in our governing documents, but with a recognition of how the electoral system and technology have evolved to make authoritarianism – i.e., unconstitutional power – the new norm.)

The only way back to a more balanced state is to return to that “balance of power” (checks and balances) found in the Constitution.

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



Simply getting Trump/MAGA out of power, which is JOB #1 in stopping the slide into authoritarianism, won't fix the problems that made Trump/Maga possible in the first place.

In addition to getting the Trump/MAGA team out of office, we need to get Non-Trumpist/Non-MAGA folks into office.

- Tools/Activities:
  - VOTE!
  - Get others to vote!
  - Influence politicians/legislators/candidates
  - Build communities and infrastructures

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



Next steps: Fix the broken parts of the system.

One big reason the system is broken is due to the “weaponization of partisan primaries.”

Left mainly to the states, primaries are subject only to the restraints imposed by the courts and the will of the people.

Primaries have become the focal point of pressure from the parties.

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



As Nick Troiano writes in his book, *The Primary Solution*, “the problem with partisan primaries is that the *ideological fringes have disproportionate influence in our political system, which produces unrepresentative outcomes and leads to extreme polarization.*”

Don’t take my word for it. Here’s the view of those two Constitutional Founding Father “lightweights” George Washington and John Adams, as provided by Troiano in his book:

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



In his 1796 Farewell Address, Washington warned,

“The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism.”

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



John Adams wrote in a 1780 letter:

“There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution.”

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



They were warning us about the dangers of a two, dominant-party situation, but it is the evolution of partisan primaries and their “weaponization” that has taken us from a Congress of moderate Republican Arlen Spectors and moderate Democrat Joe Liebermans, to one with Marjorie Taylor Greenes and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’.

And, how 8% of the voters can elect 83% of the house.

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



As Jonah Goldberg has pointed out, by moving to partisan primaries in the first place this system panders to non-representative voters, saying:

“We’re the only advanced industrialized democracy in the world whose parties have given up the ability to pick their own candidate. Instead, we farm it out to the angriest people on the left and the right. Add-in the narcissistic psychosis of Trump and you get what’s happening.”

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



There’s another powerful disruptor to our traditional system of representative self-governance that needs to be fixed in order to return sanity to our system:

The ability of wealthy special interests and billionaires to influence elections, made possible by the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2010 ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*.

A very complicated issue, but necessary if we are ever going to put representative democracy back into the hands of real people.

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



Though it may seem insurmountable now, overturning Citizens United is essential to eliminating the asymmetrical advantages the rich have when it comes to our electoral politics.

Traditional strategies:

- Wait for the Supreme Court to do it (a very long-term approach)
- Amend the Constitution (faster, but very hard to do)

Non-traditional strategy:

- Corporate **powers** (not rights) are subject to state law. Motivate state legislatures to pass laws limiting domestic corporations’ power to engage in election activity or ballot-issue activity

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment”



Three steps to preserving democracy, regardless of “identity”:

- Step 1: Since it seems impossible to restrain the Trump/MAGA regime from illegal acts, oust them from power and return to the norms of respect for institutions and rule of law (put politicians in who will respect the Constitution and rule of law)
- Step 2: Fix one of the primary (if you will) reasons such tribal partisans gained power so we can return to saner governance by reasonable people
- Step 3: Even the electoral playing field for everyone

# A Constitutional “Break Glass Moment” (and Self-Care)



Move over Elizabeth Kubler-Ross –

We’re all trying to manage our way through the phases of feelings created by the unfolding domestic and global events, such as: fear, confusion, anger, anxiety, etc.

Is there a “break glass moment” equivalent in this context?  
(Another spoiler alert...there is.)

Only you know when that moment happens for you, but when it does, know you are not alone. It’s hard, but not hopeless. As Joyce Vance always says:

## **We’re in this together**