

We the People: To Defuse the Presidency, Revive Congress and Checks and Balances

by David Adler

The overwhelming, mushrooming growth of presidential power in both foreign and domestic affairs, marked by executive aggrandizement and legislative abdication, leaves students of the Constitution begging for a spirited revival of checks and balances, of the sort envisioned by delegates to the Constitutional Convention. In the Framers' view, the way to contain the presidency and protect against the rise of a knave or a despot, was to hedge and trim its authority at every turn and further restrain the exercise of its powers through constitutional checks wielded by Congress and the judiciary. The Convention's strict enumeration of executive powers in Article II, a stylistic approach urged by James Madison to "confine and define" the Office of the Presidency, met the moment. Reinforced by checks and balances, then a novelty in the evolution of constitutionalism, and the founding generation's repudiation of usurpation of power, born of its own dreadful experience under the yoke of British tyranny, the prospects for a limited presidency seemed attainable.

What the Framers could not have anticipated was the decline of Congress. In Federalist No. 51, Madison had observed that, in a republic, "the legislature necessarily predominates." Rather than creating three co-equal branches, the Framers endowed Congress, not the president, with the most important powers. Indeed, Congress was given primacy. The authority to make laws, ensure their execution in accordance with legislative aims, the powers of oversight and investigation, taxing and spending and, indeed, the lion's share of authority in foreign affairs and national security, stamped Congress as the nation's "first branch of government." The principal limits on the powers of Congress were to be found in the authorization of the presidential veto and judicial review of the constitutionality of national laws. But the power of removal of both the executive and the judiciary was entrusted to Congress. Neither branch was granted the power to remove members of Congress. The executive and the judicial departments, as Madison noted, were executors of the laws of Congress. They might exercise a negative over the legislative authority, but neither was a substitute for it.

Congress was entrusted with the power of impeachment, the ultimate means of protecting the republic from an errant president. Madison's remarks in the Convention about the dangers of the presidency—subversion of the republic, usurpation and instigator of revolts—



as the principal source of tyranny, necessitated the creation of a power for Congress that could prevail in an existential clash with the executive. The Convention's rationale for vesting the impeachment authority in Congress reflected its confidence in the incentive of members—grounded in their oath of office and political instincts—to defend their constitutional powers from executive acts of usurpation. Madison placed his faith in the nature of men who sought public office, not in their virtue or goodness, but in their ambition. In Federalist No. 51, he wrote that the "great security against a gradual concentration of the general powers in the same department, consists in giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments of others." He added, in words that have become immortal: "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place."

Hannah Arendt, an eminent philosopher in the post war world, and author of "The Origins of Totalitarianism," rightly observed that Madison's expectation—"ambition to counteract ambition"—meant the "ambition to excel and be of 'significance,'" not the ambition to make a career." As things have turned out, however, many members of Congress have little ambition to excel, only ambition to make a career. The reluctance of lawmakers to defend their turf in the face of executive aggrandizement, grounded in their fear of assuming unpopular positions or being targeted by the president, either of which would undermine their goal of longevity, betrays the vision of the nation's founders, who could not have imagined that representatives would sacrifice personal and professional interests to remain in Washington.

When Congress is controlled by members committed to longevity and careerism, it ceases to be the institution that Madison envisioned, one that faithfully performs its responsibilities and checks executive aggrandizement of power, including the vaulting ambitions that corrupt our constitutional system—all in fear of losing their clout and, ultimately, their seats. They may save their careers, but not the Constitution.

Sponsored in part by Humanities North Dakota, www.HumanitiesND.org



Opinion: Ignorance and Gullibility

by Perry London

It has been fascinating to watch how a woefully ignorant and gullible American public can be conned into believing that somehow the Republican party has their best economic interests at heart when legislative initiatives and policies are developed and enacted. They placate millions of people by using cultural issues, most having little or no real impact on the lives of most of these people. For example: there are only 1.3 million (.5%) transgendered people in U.S. Buying into one or more cultural issue and blatantly voting against their economic self-interest is simply foolish. It is becoming clearer that the interests, policies and legislative actions of the Republican party are to grow the wealth of the most affluent in our society. In part, this effort to expand income inequality is being done to continue to receive campaign donations that help the bought and paid for politicians attain and maintain their Congressional jobs.

The focus of the shadow or co-president (Elon Musk) has been cutting federal spending through the very likely unconstitutional Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). While efficiency may be in the name of this entity, there is very little being done that improves government efficiency. Yes, there is waste, fraud and



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abuse in any large-scale operation including most private business operations similar in size of several of the federal departments experiencing this chainsaw approach to budget cutting. The Defense Department (DoD), the largest department in the federal government, has not been successfully audited since the mid-1990s because they are unable to document how they spent tens of billions of dollars yet always sees its funding level grow. Audit DoD first.

Elon Musk receives approximately \$8 million in government funding per day, but it is doubtful those federal funds will be cut. During the next few months remember taking this chain saw approach to cutting federal spending is about saving revenue that can be used for a massive tax cut that almost exclusively benefits the most affluent in our society and reduces the tax rate on corporations. U.S. corporations already pay notoriously low taxes thanks to an underfunded and understaffed IRS

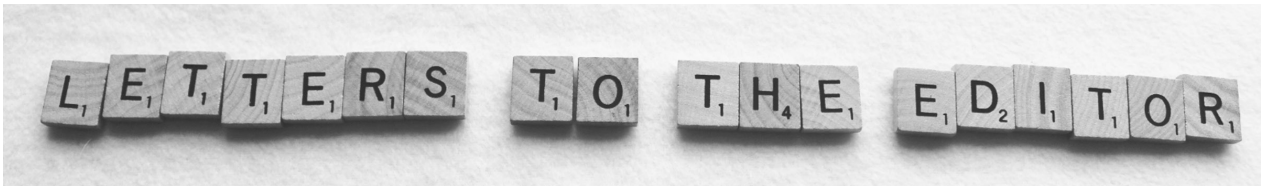
and seemingly endless tax loopholes placed in our tax code by well-paid lobbyist who legally bribe, thanks Supreme Court, Congressional members to do their dirty work of ripping off the American people.

It has been stated endlessly that the public should not listen to what any politician says but watch what he/she does. The current president is arguably one of biggest and best liars we have ever had as president. He lied over 30,000 documentable (Washington Post) times in public during his first term as president. It is possible that he no longer knows the difference between the truth and lies. Way too many voters felt that what Republican candidate Donald J. Trump said during the campaign was just normal political rhetoric and we all are beginning to see they were wrong, and all Americans may have to pay a huge price for this misinterpretation of this notorious liar. It is amazing given what we all witnessed from Donald Trump in terms of dishonesty, coercion, manipulation and bold face lying during his first term as president, that millions still find him somewhat, by no means overwhelmingly, trustworthy on several policy areas.

After only a few months experiencing chaos, most people did not believe this level of utter madness was possible. Chaos was always part of the plan (Project

2025) because it makes it difficult for most Americans to comprehend what is really happening, so they simply ignore everything and will be truly shocked when the impact of all this chaos is realized. So far, the current president has called himself a King in an online statement and stated, "He who saves his Country does not violate any Law". Most of the country does not want a King nor do we think we need a ruler that believes he is above the law with impunity. Keep in mind we are only a few months into the new term of four years for the current president.

It is of vital importance to remember that the current president won the presidency with less than 50% of the vote. He does not have any mandate to do what he has been doing yet he could very well in short order destroy our democracy and make the world a much more dangerous place by siding with what we always thought were the bad guys (most notably Vladimir Putin) throughout the world. We have a huge problem developing that was the result of millions of voters doing exactly what the founding fathers were afraid of, making an uninformed and ignorant decision to allow an unscrupulous, corrupt and narcissistic politician to manipulate the public into electing a corrupt and self-serving individual as president.



An open letter to our congressional delegation to Washington DC

Open letter to Senators Hoeven, Cramer and Representative Fedorchak,

As owners of a medium sized ranch and farm in Northeast North Dakota, we feel it is our responsibility to request that USDA staff cuts are rescinded. Right now, producers are experiencing uncertainty over new tariffs. We are also currently planning 2025 crops. Staff cuts could

force producers to drive five counties away and wait in line to go over onerous paperwork without the experts we rely on locally. Farmer's most important capital is humans, ourselves and support directly in our USDA community.

There is real fear in Farm Country regarding our current inputs, markets, and program assistance. The bulk of

reassurance comes from dedicated USDA employees who help us navigate through trying times. Cutting staff delays certainties that are needed to assist farmers in person.

Speaking of in-person support, farmers need our federal representatives to come home to answer questions as soon as possible. Please Senators Hoeven, Cramer and Rep-

resentative Fedorchak, come home and talk to us at real town halls. Even if you don't have concrete answers to our questions, please come in person to reassure us that you are in this with us.

Respectfully respond to our request,
Travis and Karen Anderson, Benson County, Warwick, ND.
Verified by phone April 3, 2025 - LAO

Devils Lake Journal, 155-940 is published Tuesday and Thursday at 516 4th Street NE, Devils Lake, ND 58301

Periodicals postage paid at Devils Lake, ND 58301

Postmaster: Send address changes to: Devils Lake Journal, 516 4th Street NE, Devils Lake, ND 58301



DEVILS LAKE JOURNAL

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