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Headline: Our Constitution needs more work

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WHOEVER wins the coming election should seriously think of amending our Constitution. It will require a lot of political capital, but there is an urgent need to change our Charter in the following ways for better governance, more equality and a realistic adjustment toward improvement in our current anomalous situation.

There should be run-off elections with our penchant to have multiple self-nominated presidential candidates that give whoever wins a slim incremental increase over also-rans which hardly translates to political capital. In fact, it diminishes it and leaves the electorate dissatisfied and the victor with an eked-out win reaping a lot of future obstruction. Multiple candidates means they are under delusions that will eventually translate to election protests and other polarizing moves as well as paralyzing governance and policymaking. A run-off election should settle that. Our political parties are too numerous without the necessary numbers of constituents and well-crafted platforms. Our self-nominated, ambitious even if inexperienced candidates are just too many. It is time to solve this awkward and unworkable situation with run-off elections where the first two who get the most votes are made to run against each other in a separate election. Then a majority is garnered and the winner is clearly that, with the political capital to use. And political parties should be reviewed as to how they are recognized and how they operate. Too many of them with no particular direction or platform have brought chaos.

Next is to address the travesty of the party-list system. This constitutional provision was meant to be inclusive and bring to Congress marginalized groups which had no chance of entering it due to the money politics and elitist establishment that excluded them. This provision has been gamed by those with money and influence to the point that it has brought about the opposite of what was intended. It is time to admit this as we see the dynasties and the elite that have taken it over and the singular misrepresentation that it has brought about in Congress. It is clear and obvious that we have allowed this provision to be misused, resulting in the exact opposite that it was created for. It is time we woke up to this reality and do something to correct it.

The Election Law of which the Comelec is the creation has to be revised and reinforced. The unthinking provision that all Comelec commissioners should be lawyers is a recipe for chaos. The election has to be managed. Most lawyers have no experience in management. Moreover, the digital world is here and it is essential that it is understood and managed as a tool for clean and efficient elections. Most lawyers of the age of the current commissioners are not digital-savvy which makes them take their contractor Smartmatic or whoever they use as a service provider as speaking gospel truth. This is a perilous position.

We have never seen a Comelec as chaotic and inept as this one. And much of the reason is that it comes from the way the law is worded that limits the appointments exclusively to lawyers. And not even lawyers chosen for their familiarity or experience with the election law. That debate fiasco has more to it than meets the eye. For once I agree with Commissioner Rey Bulay, the Comelec people involved should be on suspension while the mess is investigated. But then they have no competent replacements and since the election is fast approaching, they have to make do with appointees who have yet to explain what happened. It just shows you the quality of the personnel that Comelec has engaged to run an election with 67 million registered voters.

There are other constitutional provisions that have to be amended or added to allow a real democratic establishment to take place. Democracy is not perfect but it is still the best, most satisfying and widely acceptable way to run a government and serve the population.

There are, too, economic provisions that need to be tweaked or added so as to bring more jobs and subsequent prosperity to the general public. It must overcome the control of the economy by a few families in a population of 110 million and the protectionist inclination that shuts out foreign investment that can bring more economic progress for the majority. This is now a global world, and we should wake up to it. Opportunity must be given for education, medical services and a comfortable life (not necessarily rich in the usual materialistic meaning but satisfying) that will be humanizing and humanitarian. This can only come about when ordinary citizens are given the chance to better themselves through the sponsorship of the state. In plain words, jobs with decent incomes for those who qualify. And the means to qualify.

Our natural resources must be developed in a sustainable manner with a view to future generations having their use too. Protection of these resources must be underlined. A recognition of climate change must come with the steps to control it as well as the necessary mitigation of its bad consequences.

Climate change and disappearing natural resources can turn our future into dystopian circumstances. We owe it to ourselves and our future generations to do what is necessary. This is so essential, it should be in the basic law of every society on earth. It is time that the Constitution addresses these new conditions in our planet and country.

I hope these thoughts where I state the obvious will contribute to bring about some thought and action to do what is necessary to improve our national life. A constitution must meet the needs of the time, not act as a protection for fossils and their fossilized world view.