

Repeals mean activity

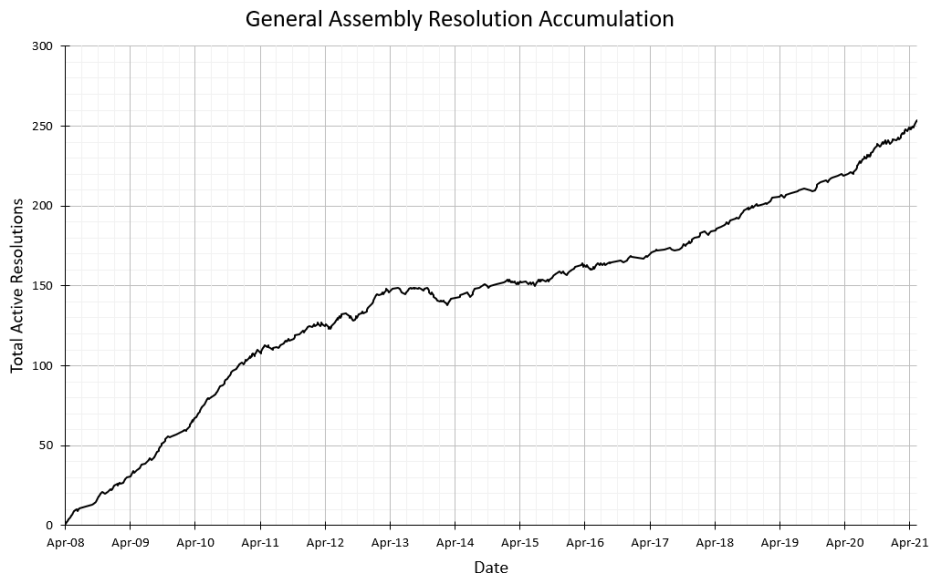
Imperium Anglorum*

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This essay continues in the vein of previous essays and papers that have gone somewhat into the wayside. Mousebumples wrote, by now a long time ago, an essay in which she asserted that replacements were not necessary.¹ Much has changed in recent years. Today, the ascribed ‘insist[ence] that almost every repealed resolution needs a replacement’ has expanded beyond the WA regulars; it has moved into practice as well, with many voters also bringing similar arguments in regional proposal discussion threads.

The ancient point, however, that a repealer need not provide a replacement, is given less value than it deserves. And this is for almost nothing other than out-of-character reasons.

One of the great problems with the Assembly today is simply the multitude of the resolutions. We have legislated on many things. The number of active resolutions is higher than ever, having passed 250 in April 2021.



Wallenburg, *Discord* (18 May 2021).

* Delegate for Europe, cyrilparsons.london@gmail.com.

¹ Mousebumples, ‘Why Repeal?’ *NationStates* (2011) <https://forum.nationstates.net/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=111104>.

This has naturally led to a substantial fall in the number of topics available. The topics remaining are trivial, obscure, or devilishly complex.² That is not to say there are *no* interesting topics left: while abortion seems to have reached an ultimate conclusion with GA 499 ‘Access to Abortion’, the repeal-replace cycles on paid leave and democratic elections assistance serve to make activity and provide needed experience.

The lack of topics generally, however, has at least three major effects:

1. New authors are turned away from the Assembly by the contradiction and duplication rules, as it appears everything they have thought of is already done and they therefore have nothing to add.
2. New authors who have passed that hurdle have few incentives to stay when they see few places to continue writing.
3. In the long run, as topics shuffle out, authors also lose chances to gain prestige. Moreover, they are unable to gain much-needed experience in writing effective resolutions. (A culture of practise drafts not being present.)

These are major problems affecting the General Assembly writ large. While there are a certain few authors who are entirely willing to write many drafts, to varying degrees of success, the vast majority of players are not motivated to legislate for its own sake. The old advice of ‘write to the category’ has never been useful: the categories are not prompts and what motivates most authors is a passion for some topic, not the statistical effect to which the topic can be attached.

At present, the contradiction and duplication rules make it difficult, if not impossible, for authors to proceed with a clean slate. Authors are forced to become not only legislators, but parsers for old legislation. They must identify flaws, at times dubious,³ and write replacements of sometimes doubtful value.⁴ From an in-character perspective, this is what we ought to be doing: it is almost entirely incontrovertible that we ought only to accept *improvements* on the status quo than shuffle off the legislative coil towards undiscovered country.

² Eg, respectively, the failed proposal ‘The Environmental Protections Act’ (late November 2021) which established hotlines for member nation parks, GA 585 ‘Emergency Broadcasting Standards’, and my old draft, ‘Deposit Insurance Fund’.

³ Eg GA 374 ‘Rule of Law’ somehow protecting qualified immunity. See also Imperium Anglorum (9 Oct 2021) <https://imperiumanglorum.wordpress.com/2021/10/09/resolutions-that-dont-do-anything/>.

⁴ Ibid.

The easiest way to solve this dearth to topics equitably would be something akin to the sunset proposal which I made on the Technical forum.⁵ But any form of sunset proposal seems not to be forthcoming.

As a community – and I speak broadly, including those voting in the Assembly and in various regional ministries, – we therefore are left with the second-best: repeals. Opening the door for more topics would be easy if we merely took a more positive view of repeals without replacement. While, repeals without replacement are probably bad in-character, they also provide the space needed for new authors to gain a footing and to develop it. The in-character effect must be balanced against foregone opportunities: opportunities that are increasingly necessary in an Assembly becoming ever more filled-in.

There are two issues which come immediately to mind.

First is that replacements might not emerge rapidly or that they might be worse than the original resolution. Uncertainty and time lags are very likely. But we also need that time to give new authors a chance to make their marks. For example, if I were to announce a repeal of some resolution and that I were going to replace it, my announcement alone would probably make new authors turn away from writing their own draft.⁶

Second is that leaving topics open for replacement will lead to their being monopolised by authors who spend their time shooting proposals at the wall to see what sticks. This is, I feel, a more grave issue. It would not help new authors if experienced authors simply retake all open spots. A clear consensus would have to emerge in the voting public to restrain this kind of destructive behaviour, preferably by rejecting such self-serving proposals at vote and giving meaningful encouragement to new authors.

If we truly want to pursue pro-activity policies, we must also pursue policies that actively *create opportunities* for more people to be active. This cannot be done without repeals. It cannot do for the Assembly to be dominated by just five or so authors. Established authors will have to learn to share. That is not such a bad thing.

⁵ Imperium Anglorum, *NationStates* (23 Jun 2021) <https://forum.nationstates.net/viewtopic.php?p=38762237#p38762237>.

⁶ The second contention, on inferior replacement, is no different from the status quo. Replacements *at present* are already at times inferior to the originals.