

## **The Danger of Hyper-Partisanship**

The Founding Fathers of the United States of America could not, and did not, foresee the drastic changes in our society almost 250 years later. The Founder's Vision is of Congress residing as both the most important and powerful branch of the Federal government, creating laws to resolve problems of the present and future, and acting as a hefty check on the executive powers of the President. In some regards, however, the Founder's Vision of what the United States Congress could be is an ideal condition, and borderline depressive considering what we have today. Our current Congress fails to meet the Founder's Vision, through hyper-partisanship that directly causes dysfunction and blind party loyalty.

Our Founding Fathers knew of the possibility and dangers of hyper-partisanship, because they had seen it before. Sarah Pruitt, a frequent contributor to History.com, wrote this about the Founder's Vision regarding partisanship: "Many of them saw parties—or 'factions,' as they called them—as corrupt relics of the monarchical British system that they wanted to discard in favor of a truly democratic government." Partisanship creates an inherent us-versus-them mentality, appealing to the most basic survival instincts in humans by making the opposition a mortal enemy. What our Founding Fathers could not predict is how strong hyper-partisanship has become in the United States. As an example, then Majority Leader of the Senate, Mitch McConnell, blocked Democratic President Obama's nomination to the Supreme Court in March of 2016 because it was an election year. Senator McConnell then rushed Republican President Trump's nomination to the Supreme Court 5 weeks before the 2020 Presidential Election. McConnell, now Minority Leader, has sworn that if Democratic President Biden will nominate a Supreme Court Justice in 2024, it will be blocked because it is an election year. This kind of

hyper-partisanship is a failure to meet the Founder's Vision and should not be a normalized process, as it creates political dysfunction.

The hyper-partisanship of today is unprecedented in our nation's history and has corroded the wheels of the political process in Congress to a grinding halt, called political dysfunction. Taking the most basic function of Congress, the budget, and we can see the dire straits hyper-partisanship has put us in. In the 250 years the United States has been passing budgets, it has only been in the last 40 that we have had government shutdowns resulting from the failure of Congress to pass a budget. This failure has never been because the U.S. government was broke --it was because of political differences every single time. This hyper-partisanship causes political dysfunction, an inability to accomplish anything in a legislative body, even as basic as the budget to fund the government. Beyond just the budget for the government, dysfunction also means that our Congress is unable to take necessary steps to address climate change, racial inequities, equal protections for oppressed groups, healthcare, and so on. Regardless of the position one may have on each of these issues, our Congress is characterized as unable to successfully pass even the most basic pieces of legislation. Our Founder's Vision was for our Congress to not just reactively address problems through legislation, but also proactively solve problems that Congress may see. Our current Congress is a failure to meet the Founder's Vision, as political dysfunction has prevented Congress from reliably, consistently, passing legislation which is necessary for our nation.

This hyper-partisanship can be tied back to the advent of the bully pulpit, the President's power to address the nation as its leader and change the narrative or direction of policies. The Founder's Vision was one of a limited executive branch, specifically because of their experience with the monarchy of Britain. The President was supposed to have some power to veto

legislation, not as the one to propose broad sweeping policy initiatives for Congress to pass. The Presidency has become corrupted through hyper-partisanship, as Democrats will usually only work with a Democratic President, and Republicans the same. Expanding this, it's no longer Congressional leaders setting a policy agenda for their party and for the nation -it is the President. Our Congress additionally no longer truly maintains independence from our President. Usually, Democrats will fall in line with their Democratic President's policy proposals, and will not veer off the path and truly question or fight against what can be a legitimately bad proposal. The same applies to Republicans, and this aspect of our Congress further demonstrates how distant the Founder's Vision is from today, as we now have blind loyalty to a political party's leader, the President of the United States, to determine what legislation should be pushed. Our Founder's Vision was deliberately set to have Congress as the first, most important, and most detailed branch of government, that is independent from the bully pulpit the President has.

If our Founding Fathers were to look upon the United States today, and see how far our Congress has veered from their Vision, they would be deeply disappointed. The Congress of today fails to meet the Founder's Vision, as hyper-partisanship has taken a deep root into our systems, directly causing political dysfunction and blind party loyalty set by the President. In these ways, our current Congress is not just a corruption of the Founder's Vision, but is antithetical to that Vision.

## Works Cited

Pruitt, Sarah. "The Founding Fathers Feared Political Factions Would Tear the Nation Apart."

*History*, 7 Mar. 2019,

<https://www.history.com/news/founding-fathers-political-parties-opinion>.