

federal government should increase the health insurance tax credit to maintain out-of-pocket expenses at a constant level and extend it to more permanently displaced workers.

Permanently displaced workers face earnings declines between 14 and 20 percent. Therefore, the time has come to insure against sharp declines in wages, not just unemployment. The federal government should create a new program that covers 50 percent of lost wages for workers who take lower-paying jobs. Providing wage and health insurance to permanently displaced workers in their new jobs can broaden reemployment into new sectors and facilitate on-the-job training. Because the goal is to provide partial insurance against extreme income fluctuations, wage insurance should be available to all permanently displaced workers who have at least two years of tenure at the previous job. A wage insurance program that replaces 50 percent of earnings losses (up to a maximum of \$10,000 a year) for up to two years would cost roughly \$3.5 billion annually, to be covered by an insurance premium of roughly \$25 per worker a year.

American workers are being asked to embrace globalization at a time when their government has turned a blind eye to the need for new domestic policies to ensure they thrive in the global marketplace; in some areas, it has even weakened the slim protections that exist. That's why it is critical that the next president work with Congress to put in place an Economic Security Program to respond to the real anxiety faced by too many American families. ■

Expand the House of Representatives

Larry Sabato

The Founders intended the House of Representatives, with its small districts and frequent elections, to be the pulse of American democracy. But today's House often has no measurable pulse at all, its arteries clogged with special interest agendas and self-satisfied members. With guaranteed reelection in computer-drawn districts gerrymandered to further partisan interests, representatives often escape electoral accountability. Challengers are limited by the large size of the districts and their inability to raise enough campaign money. As a result, politics has become cartel-ized—not by Democrats or Republicans,

LARRY SABATO is director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics and the author of *A More Perfect Constitution: 23 Proposals to Revitalize Our Constitution and Make America A Fairer Country*.

but by incumbents and their affluent lobbying allies.

The Founders wanted House members to be closely bound to their constituencies. Bowing to George Washington's objection that 40,000 constituents per member was insufficiently representative, the original 65 members represented 30,000 citizens each. It is easy to imagine Washington's horror if he had known the average district in 2008 would contain close to 700,000 people. No wonder citizens agree in most polls that "no one is listening to me and my family"; they likely have never met their member of Congress. To change how politics is played, we must rewrite some basic rules—and more than double the size of the House of Representatives.

A larger, more representative House is not without precedent. European democracies almost across the board have more legislative members and bet-

ter representation ratios. The average British MP in the 646-member House of Commons represents 91,000 people, and France's 577-member assembly boasts a 1-to-102,000 legislator-to-constituent ratio.

Reverting to Washington's 30,000 constituent standard would be impractical; it would mean a 10,000-member

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House. Indeed, James Madison recognized the need for some upper ceiling on the number of House members: "A certain number [of representatives] seems to be necessary to secure the benefits of free consultation and discussion... On the other hand, the number ought at most to be kept within a certain limit, in order to avoid the confusion and intemperance of a multitude." From Madison's perspective, a 1,000-member House of Representatives, with about 300,000 constituents per representative, would seem reasonable.

A bigger House would require some additional expenditure, but legislative operations comprise a tiny fraction of the federal budget. Staff resources could be held constant, more or less, with costs divided by 1,000 instead of 435. The typical value of each vote would fall, strengthening a governing party's capacity to pass legislation without buying members' votes with pet projects. Lobbyists, who would gain little from targeting individual members, would focus on influencing public debates rather than brokering dubious backroom deals.

House expansion would bridge the divide between representatives and constituents. Smaller districts could more closely correspond with community boundaries and media markets. This would provide representation for local concerns and revive long-forgotten traditions of door-to-door retail campaign-

ing. Challengers would need far less money to make their stand, relying on foot power more than a green machine fed by barrels of cash. With candidates making their cases individually to more voters, incumbency would matter somewhat less, and upsets would probably be more common. Diverse ethnic and racial minorities, beyond African Americans and Hispanics, would be able to win some representation.

House expansion will be practically impossible without a Constitutional amendment, something entrenched incumbents would loathe to pass. However, reform can bypass a recalcitrant Congress if two-thirds of state legislatures apply for an Article V Constitutional Convention. Upon ratification by three-quarters of the states, Convention resolutions become adopted Constitutional amendments. Although historically unprecedented and unlikely for the foreseeable future, a new Constitutional Convention is not as far-fetched as one might think. Twice in the past—in 1969 over the “one-person, one-vote” Supreme Court ruling and in 1983 over the balanced budget amendment—32 of the required 34 states applied for one.

The American public’s cynicism toward Congress cannot be diluted by tinkering around the margins. Constitutional reform is necessary to break the stranglehold that professional politicians and moneyed interests have on our government. But it’s no longer enough to throw out the incumbents—we first need to add more members to their ranks. ▀

Cap and Lease Carbon

John Irons

Global warming is fast becoming a reality. Unless significant action is taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we can expect irreversible environmental and economic damage. While there is little serious debate on the need to reduce emissions—especially of carbon dioxide—there is a substantial debate on how to reduce these emissions. In theory, either a direct quantity restriction (cap-and-trade) or a price mechanism (tax) could be used to reduce production of carbon dioxide. But there is a policy stalemate on which is better.

Many environmental advocates—such as the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Nature Conservancy—lean toward a cap-and-trade regime simply because of what it is not. It is not a tax; and since politicians don’t like

JOHN IRONS *is the research and policy director at the Economic Policy Institute.*