

Community Comment  
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### Broken Government?

We are about three quarters into the first year of the Trump presidency. It only feels ten times as long. Whether you support him or not, you have to concede that we have argued about and questioned everything he has done. We have questioned his integrity. We have questioned his personal fitness for the position. We have questioned his sanity. We have questioned his governing style, if he has one. We have questioned his behavior. We have questioned his choices. We have even questioned what party he really belongs to.

While inspired by President John F. Kennedy, I was too young to vote for him. Since the mid 60's, I've voted in every presidential election this country has had. In fact, I don't think I've missed any election. I take my vote seriously and do my homework on the people running and the issues we are concerned about.

There have been many times that my preference did not prevail. While I appreciated the accomplishments of Lyndon Johnson in the advancement of civil rights, I strongly disagreed with his position on Viet Nam. I believe that war cost way more than the dear lives lost on both sides. I think it fractured our trust in government. Richard Nixon's time in office brought that mistrust to a head. When he resigned rather than endure a full impeachment, there was a purge of current office holders like we hadn't seen in modern times. A new generation of people went to Washington on both sides of the aisle. Gerald Ford, Nixon's vice president, was probably good for the country but he made the mistake of granting a pardon to Nixon. I would have rather seen the legal system run its course. A pardon could have been granted if there had been a conviction of laws broken. The American public would have seen evidence that no man or woman is above the law.

Jimmy Carter was elected as an outsider. That's what we wanted and that was what we got. It turned out that the outside thing didn't work out that well in terms of getting things done. Ronald Reagan was a successful two term President. I thought his economic policy was damaging to the country. Worse than that, very suspicious things were done with Iran before the election and Iran/ Contra was a bigger deal than we thought.

George Bush, Reagan's vice president, was a one term President. He seemed out of touch with average Americans and invaded Iraq. How much did that assault set the stage for our current terrorist problems? We could study that for years. Bill Clinton followed with two terms. He was impeached for a sexual indiscretion and lying under oath about it. He was not convicted and had some popular support of his policies and a strong economy when he left office.

George W. Bush was selected by the Supreme Court under controversial terms. He declared war on Afghanistan and invaded Iraq. The Afgan war has become the longest in

our history. Barack Obama was our first black president and inherited an economic meltdown; the worst since the Great Depression. He left with a recovered economy.

They were all imperfect. They all made mistakes. None of them damaged our democracy. President Trump has changed that. A Republican said the other night that he doubts our democracy under Trump is survivable.

This is serious business. The best experiment in modern democracy is at stake.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.