

Minimum Political Reform

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EFFECTIVE POLITICAL REFORM requires approval of four fundamental points: public financing of electoral campaigns, party loyalty, the end of coalitions in proportional elections and the implementation of a performance clause.

Public campaign financing is indispensable in order to avoid the increasingly greater interference from economic power, which corrupts the electoral process. The truth is that there are parliamentarians elected today imagining how they are going to raise the resources in four years in order to assure their reelection.

Public financing by itself does not resolve the problem of corruption and the diversion of public resources to electoral campaigns. Similar problems to Brazil's occur throughout the world, even in countries in the developed world. Also necessary is greater transparency of public bidding and expenses at the various levels of government.

Party fidelity is already the best instrument for preventing the degrading spectacle of post-election physiological bonds. It is natural that someone will be dissatisfied in one place and want to go elsewhere. But this should be the exception and not the rule, since it has prevailed for some years. Each case is a separate case and should be treated individually by the Electoral Court.

The prohibition of coalitions in proportional elections is of all basic measures the only one that will by itself achieve effective results. Proportional coalition, by which a vote for José can elect João, is a deformity that exists only in Brazil.

The corrosion of the exercise of politics and its exclusion from people's daily life has transformed political reform into the ugly duckling of institutional reform. Everyone is interested in social security reform, union reform, in tax reform, because these reforms hit the population directly in the pocketbook.

By contrast, as seen in public opinion polls, political reform interests only politicians, which is a tremendous mistake. Without political reform it is practically impossible to attune any other institutional change to the wishes of the majority of the population. The lack of synch between the voices from the streets and the representatives derives from this.

There is a lack of comprehension that political reform is the *mother* of all reforms, precisely to assure the improvement of the institutions responsible for the handling of them all. Political reform will establish new instruments for voter-taxpayer-citizens to expand involvement with their representatives.

Since returning to the direct election of their presidents of the Republic, Brazilians have not had two sequential elections under the same electoral rules. The National Congress hasn't had political reform, but it makes a point of periodically altering the manner in which it organizes and conducts elections.

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