

Trial & Error

Tales of Well Meaning Political Decisions Gone Wrong

Jeff L. Schuster

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all of those who have desired a more civil and effective democratic political process.

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PREFACE

I believe that the United States is at a crossroads of political discourse. Most people do not readily understand the economic fallout of political decisions. Furthermore, it seems as if political decisions made by voters and politicians have more to do with personal scandals and innuendo rather than the substance of logical decisions. Our electorate right now is so polarized that we call each other names and never get down to the business of running our country. Family and friends refuse to talk about important political topics because they will somehow upset or offend others that disagree with their position. This reluctance leads to isolated political grumbling rather than genuine political progress.

When I watch the political discourse in our country, it pains me to see that our government officials and their supporters have devolved into discussions about things that really don't matter when determining our fate. We have government shutdowns, obstinate politicians on both sides and voters who are not fully educated on the issues or the consequences of political decisions. I truly believe that the United States and select local governments are in major jeopardy if we do not start making progress on decisions that need to be made and stop the petty bickering.

Trial & Error is a collection of several short stories told from the perspective of a Mayor that we would all probably love as a political leader even if his ideas do not always work out. I am a lover of a great story and felt like communicating political concepts through stories would be the optimum way to connect with those who may be jaded by other philosophical books on politics.

I hope that this book helps you understand the full impact of political decisions that seem quite harmless on the surface. Most of these decisions initially seem to offer untold benefits but end in catastrophic results to our economy and our social wellbeing. I hope that reading this book helps you gain a better understanding of the results of these decisions and why they lead to adverse results that may not be expected on the front end.

I believe you will find Mayor Wallaby to be fair in many of his decisions. At the end of each story about Mayor Wallaby and Trial Town, I have included a section that describes a real-world experience that mimics the lessons learned in Trial Town.

Most of all, I hope that this book informs you about the serious implications of key political issues and give you courage to cast a vote that makes a positive difference in our government's future.

INTRODUCTION TO TRIAL TOWN

Hi, my name is Arthur Wallaby. I'm the mayor of Trial Town. I want to tell you a brief story of how Trial Town came to be.

Recently, the President of the United States and a group of congressional representatives felt frustrated that many initiatives they tried in the federal government would end in larger debts and not really solve any of their problems. So they decided to pass a law to name Trial Town, an already established city of 100,000 people, as a test city. A test city means that we have been given special license by our citizens and by the Federal Government of the United States to test any form of government or economy. We are separated from any federal or state government and we can issue any laws that we like. The only requirement we have from the federal government is that we need to track any successes and/or failures so that US Government can learn from our mistakes and our successes.

Trial Town is located near the east coast in a secret location within the United States. We have a distant neighbor, Capital City, which may be mentioned from time to time; otherwise, we are a relatively isolated city. We have the typical city amenities like grocery stores, big-box stores, department stores, a post office, malls, a city hall, police stations, fire stations, parks, recreation centers, movie theatres, public schools, colleges, factories and a robust farming and ranching industry. Trial Town is a self-sustaining city. We do import and export with other countries, but we are able to manufacture many of the products that we use in our city. We even have our own military, intelligence organizations, border patrol and other departments that you may only find in a federal government.

I am the mayor of Trial Town. The great thing about Trial Town is that when our government policies fail, we get to clean the slate and start from the same place we were before we made the changes that caused the problems. That's right... Trial Town can build up massive debt or deplorable conditions for our citizens and with the press of a 'reset button', we turn the clock back; the bank accounts go back to their original balances and all of the damage that we have created with whatever government program we implement is reversed.

Unfortunately, you folks in the real world do not have our magic reset button. So you may recognize some long-term negative impacts when government leaders make the wrong decisions. I do hope that you will learn from our mistakes and some of our successes to make better decisions within your government.

1 PARTY POLITICS

“When politicians start talking about large groups of their fellow Americans as ‘enemies,’ it’s time for a quiet stir of alertness. Polarizing people is a good way to win an election, and also a good way to wreck a country.”

— Molly Ivins

In Trial Town, we have always had a traditional form of democracy. I am the mayor of Trial Town and we have a group of six folks who make up my city council; seven if you include me. Every two years the citizens of Trial Town elect or re-elect their mayor and members of city council. There are usually four candidates running for each position and the candidate with the most votes is elected. Many times the person with the most votes has received only 30% of all votes, meaning that the winning candidate really is supported by a minority of Trial Town’s population.

I realized that Capital City did not have this problem and their winning candidates normally had the majority of voters’ support when elected to office. I decided to have lunch with Capital City’s mayor Don Westland to discuss what they were doing right.

We met at one of Mayor Westland’s favorite spots in Capital City called the Main Street Café. After we dispensed with the traditional introductions and small talk, I decided to break the ice on the election discussion.

“Don,” I said, “we seem to have a problem in Trial Town with our elections. We have four candidates running for one position and winners normally receive only 30% of the vote.”

Mayor Westland interrupted. “That’s a low percentage to support an elected official.”

“That’s what I wanted to talk to you about,” I responded.

“Arthur, how can I help?”

“Don, it seems a large majority of voters support your winning candidates. I’ve heard rumors that winning candidates in Capital City get 55% of the vote. I was wondering if you could tell me your secret.”

Don smiled. “Arthur, in Capital City we have a two-party system. Each party nominates a single candidate to represent their party in the election. That means we have only two candidates running for each position. In order to win, a candidate has to win more than 50% of the vote.”

“This two-party system sounds like a simple solution. How do we get this system started in Trial Town?”

Don responded, “It’s simple, Arthur. You simply establish a two-party election system in your City Charter and then allow the parties to establish their own platforms so that your voters can decide which party they’d like to belong to.”

I left our lunch meeting with a new sense of purpose. This two-party system was a brilliant and simple concept that I knew would work well for Trial Town. It was a way to make sure that each elected official in our government would be supported by a majority of voters instead of the meager 30% support that all of us elected officials received.

I introduced the concept to my city council members and they were eager to participate in forming our new two-party system. The first party was called the Green Party and the second the Red Party. We created an election registration system where citizens of Trial Town could register as either a Green Party or Red Party member. We decided to have primary elections just like Capital City. Each party would decide which candidate they wanted to participate in the final election. This way there would only be two candidates running in the final election. The cost of this system would be slightly more as there would be two elections but it seemed well worth it to get majority support behind the winning candidate.

We announced this idea to the citizens of Trial Town and they were very happy with this two-party system. In fact, citizens started registering immediately with their desired party. People organized their parties and established belief platforms that they would stand for.

The Green Party established the following platform principles:

- 1) Treat all races, religious, and ethnic people equally;
- 2) Oppose any war unless the threat was a direct threat to Trial Town;
- 3) Support government programs that help the less fortunate; and
- 4) Public education must be available to all in Trial Town.

The Red Party established the following platform principles:

- 1) Financial responsibility is key to any successful government;
- 2) Religious and speech freedoms are paramount to a free society;
- 3) Support any war that would protect Trial Town's freedom; and
- 4) Strict enforcement of laws is the cornerstone of an organized society.

As I read both platforms, I felt so proud of each party. I would be honored to belong to either of them. Even though I saw little difference between them, most citizens of Trial Town were quick to sign up to either the Reds or the Greens. They then started holding party meetings they called caucuses, where they discussed their party's vision and which candidates best fit their party's platform standards. They also held fundraisers to raise money for their candidate's election campaign. I was amazed at how much money these political parties raised. By the time our first primary election rolled around, each party had amassed \$1 million each for six city council member positions. In their speeches in the primary elections, each candidate would talk about how they would be better than the opposing candidate to represent their party's platform in the upcoming general election.

We had successful primary elections, with many party candidates being supported by about 30% of their party's vote. Then the commotion really started. There were twelve candidates for six city council seats. I had never seen such an intense election in all my days as mayor of Trial Town. There were flyers all over the place and non-stop TV and radio advertisements. Candidates were making speeches at decked-out halls, trying to win as many votes as they could. The other thing I noticed about this election, which did not happen in past elections, was the mudslinging. Candidates and their parties were making their opposing candidates and parties out to be pure evil. I also heard very few substantive discussions about the issues that would face our city in the very near future. Each candidate had to tip the scale their direction and they would win. The intensity was something else.

Just to get a taste of the environment, I attended one of the debates between Paul Fredrick, a Red Party candidate, and Jim Peck, the Green Party candidate.

The moderator Peggy Stanton from Channel 7 News started the debate, "We're pleased to host one of the most prolific debates of Trial Town's first two-party final election between Paul Fredrick, the Red Party candidate, and Jim Peck, the Green Party candidate. I'll pose a question to a specific candidate. This candidate will have exactly one minute to respond to the question. The opposing candidate will then have one minute to respond to the same question. I ask the audience to remain silent during the debate. We'll be televising this debate live with no interruptions for commercials."

Each candidate had their own podium with their party logo and both were dressed in their best suit and tie. They looked quite professional. Naturally,

Paul Fredrick wore a red tie while Jim Peck wore a green tie. The moderator, Peggy Stanton, was seated in front of the audience, facing both candidates. Two TV cameras were stationed on both sides of the stage to pan on the left or right candidate and the moderator. I was very excited to see the show.

Peggy began with her first question. "Mr. Fredrick, you've stated that Trial Town spends too much money. What spending programs would you cut from Trial Town's current services?"

Paul Fredrick cleared his throat. "Peggy, I want to first thank Channel 7 and you for hosting this debate and thank our studio audience, who has taken the time to be engaged in our election process. As you know, Trial Town has spent money frivolously on many programs that don't benefit anyone in our town. I can't name a specific program that I'd cut until I undertake a dialogue with our mayor and other members of the city council. However, if I'm elected, you can be assured that Trial Town will become a much more fiscally responsible organization than it is today."

I was amazed at how Paul completed his answer almost exactly at one minute.

Peggy then faced Jim Peck. "Mr. Peck, can you comment on any changes that you'd make to Trial Town's current spending habits?"

Jim Peck straightened his green tie. "Peggy, I want to also thank you for providing this great venue to discuss Trial Town's future and the differences between my opponent and me. Unlike my opponent who cannot seem to name any programs he'd cut, I feel that Trial Town has not invested enough in our fine community. I believe that Trial Town can do a much better job at additional funding for schools, support for our elderly, and much improved park systems for our citizens to enjoy."

Like Paul, Jim Peck also completed his response at exactly one minute.

Peggy asked nine more questions and alternated between each candidate during the debate. I have to admit that I found some good responses to the questions by both candidates. However, I didn't feel the debate helped me decide on how I would ultimately vote.

Election Day came and went, and we ended up with the election of three Green Party candidates and three Red Party candidates. It seemed like our two-party system was an amazing success... there was no winner with less than a 55% voter approval rating in their individual race. I was looking forward to a great two-year session with my new city council, knowing that whatever opinions expressed would be those of the majority of citizens of Trial Town.

It had been a month since the excitement of the elections had ended and we all met at the City Hall for our first meeting. Our first city council meeting was interesting. The three newly elected Red Party members had big R's next to their names; the three Green Party members had big G's next to their

names, indicating their party affiliations.

I welcomed all of the new members. “Okay... first of all, congratulations to all of the recent winners of our elections here in Trial Town. I believe that you’ve all demonstrated that our two-party system is an amazing success and I’m looking very much forward to having such well-supported members of my city council for the next two years.”

I then decided to get down to business. “One of the most pressing issues facing our city is the construction of sidewalks along our Main Street. Many citizens have pointed out that all major towns have sidewalks on their main streets and we really ought to have them as well. The cost of this project has been estimated at approximately \$1 million. We will need to raise these funds with new taxes in order to complete the project in the next two years. The cost to each person in Trial Town will be approximately \$2 per year for the next seven years.”

It was at this point that I got the strangest reaction. Paul Fredrick, one of the Red Party members, blasted, “You’ve got to be kidding, Mayor! I ran my political campaign on being financially responsible and reducing the cost of operating Trial Town.... And the first order of business you have for us is a \$2 per year tax increase for every Trial Town citizen?”

As I opened my mouth to speak, Sally Hatfield piped up. “You Reds are not interested in anything that can make our town a better place. It’s always about the dollars. Two dollars per year per person is nothing if it means not getting run over by cars that race through our main street.”

Then an even stranger thing happened. All city council members felt it would be best if they consulted with their individual parties on the sidewalk issue before they offered any further opinions. I thought to myself, “This must be the way a two-party government works.”

Back at Green Party headquarters, the three Green Party city council members discussed the situation with several others from the Green Party organization. It was settled; the three Green Party members not only wanted the sidewalks built, they felt the sidewalk issue had such great appeal to the voters, they would slip in a few Green Party promised projects into the sidewalk decision to get those passed as well. After all, they thought, “Mayor Wallaby would vote ‘yes’ on the sidewalk project as he was the one recommending it in the first place”. They thought, “this would be a 4-3 vote that would rule the day, regardless of what those cheap Reds wanted”. And in case any of the Green Party members were not aware... any vote in opposition to the party line would be met with no Green Party campaign funds for their next election.

Back at Red Party headquarters, the three Red Party city council members were discussing the situation along with several others from the Red Party organization. They all had mixed feelings. They did agree that their town needed sidewalks along Main Street. However, they were also committed to

operating the Trial Town government at a lower cost than it had been operated previously. They were settled... the sidewalk project could only go ahead if the added tax burden could be eliminated by cutting other costs within Trial Town's city budget. And in case any of the Red Party members were not aware... any vote in opposition to the party line would be met with no Red Party campaign funds for their next election.

As we convened the next city council meeting, I opened with, "So I trust that all of you have had ample opportunity to discuss the Main Street Sidewalk issue with your respective parties. What questions or concerns do you have about moving forward with this worthy project?"

Sally spoke up immediately, "Mayor, we Green Party members were so pleased to see that you have recognized that our city really needs Main Street sidewalks and we are in full support of this project. However, we don't believe this sidewalk project goes far enough. The Green Party believes that we could use two large parks to improve the recreation opportunities in our city. It seems petty to ask voters for \$2 per year per person for sidewalks when we could be asking for \$10 per year per person and make a noticeable improvement to Trial Town."

Upon hearing this, I noticed the faces of my Red Party city council members turning red. Paul could hold his tongue no longer, "What kind of planet are you Greenies living on? We Red Party members have a much more responsible proposal. We'll support the construction of the sidewalks along Main Street but won't support a tax increase to pay for these improvements. We believe that there are costs that can be saved within the city's current \$10 million per year budget that will allow us to fund this project within our current tax income. We further believe that we can find sufficient cost savings to give citizens of Trial Town a \$10 per year per person tax reduction."

Only thirty minutes into our city council meeting, I could see we were at an impasse. The Red Party members would not yield on their position to cut taxes and the Green Party members would not yield on their position to complete several city projects. I then spoke up. "Well, ladies and gentlemen, I am also a voting member of this council and I do not like either of your proposals. First, I don't agree that we need two additional parks at this time and don't believe this added tax will be supported by our public. Second, I'm aware that you city council members are new to our council and don't know all of ins and outs of the city budget. But I highly doubt that we can find \$1 million for the sidewalks let alone additional cuts that would enable a tax decrease."

Sally then chimed in. "Say, Mayor, what party do you want to belong to for your next election? Green or Red?"

My heart sank. I realized where this question was going. I would have to run for re-election next year and would need to affiliate with one party or the other. I suppose I could start a third party, but I was clearly aware of the

amount of money that was already held by the Red and Green parties. I would go through a high-intensity election just like these city council members and either win or lose. If I sided with the Green Party in this decision and other decisions to come, I would be a sure winner for the Green Party in an upcoming campaign. Likewise, for the Red Party. Although both party platforms seemed respectable, the resulting actions of each party were so extreme. I simply could not join one of these groups.

I responded, "Sally, I'm still considering my options at this point. At present, I'm not very happy with how the two-party system is affecting our day-to-day decision making as a city council. If this is how things work, I can't see joining either party." Trying to get the discussion back to Trial Town's sidewalks, I continued, "How about we talk through this decision? Is there any information regarding this decision that will change your position?"

Paul was the first to speak up. "I can't speak for any of the Greenies but as for all of us in the responsible Red Party, we'll need to see better numbers in order to make any budget recommendations. Under no circumstances will any of my Red Party colleagues support any tax increase."

Sally then reacted predictably. "I believe I do speak for our gracious Green Party when I say that we genuinely care about our community and have been elected by folks that also care about our community. We won't cave to these Reds and their greedy supporters who can't seem to afford a few pennies for desperately needed improvements to our town."

I responded, "It looks like we have a stalemate. I can't personally vote for either party's current proposal."

I adjourned the meeting, letting each member know that I needed to think about the situation further before I could make any further decisions on the city sidewalk issue.

When I picked up my copy of the Trial Town Gazette the following morning, I saw the proverbial icing on the cake. On the front page was printed the two statements by the city council members and some comment about me indicating that I could not demonstrate sufficient leadership qualities to pick a side. The article took up the entire front page. Then the phone calls started from members of both parties. I heard some of the most reprehensible language urging me to join their side or I was an idiot. In fact, if I didn't join their side, they would use their financial resources to embarrass me in any way they could. I could hear emotional tones in calls from both sides. These folks had fully bought into whatever they felt their parties represented.

Our first issue out of the gate and it was clear that this two-party system had some major flaws. In our past, we would have discussed the topic of sidewalks and put the decision to a vote with each person voting their conscience. Usually, council members would ask me for budget details and the accuracy of cost estimates and more detail on the nature of the project.

My sense is that the sidewalk measure would have passed as I presented it with last year's no-party city council.

Before I threw in the towel on the two-party system, I wanted to confirm that this was not some anomaly so I called Don Westland, the mayor of Capital City.

"Say, Mayor," I started, "Trial Town has attempted the two-party system that you were telling me about in our lunch meeting. At first, I thought things were going great as we got through the election process. However, when I sat down with my newly elected city council for the first time, I was shocked that they couldn't come to a consensus on the easiest decisions. Is this how things have been working in Capital City?"

Don laughed. "Yes, yes, yes... you have those pesky ideologies leaking into each decision. You have it rough your first time out. You have an equal number of members from each party. That's a recipe for deadlock. Here in Capital City, we have always had a majority of one party or the other and we tend to make decisions fully biased toward the majority party. The minority party rarely gets their opinion heard."

I felt I needed to fill Don in on our situation. "I have to tell you, Mayor, both party's ideas in our most recent city council meeting were downright nutty. I couldn't have imagined picking either side's idea."

"Yes, we've done some whacky things that were promoted by the majority party in Capital City."

"How can you run a city government that way?"

"When the majority party makes whacky decisions, they pay in the next election and the opposing party gets a turn at the majority. Then we have whacky decisions that go to the other extreme."

I persevered with my question. "Mayor, how on earth can you run your city by going one direction and then the other?"

"After many cycles of changing majority parties, the party decisions seem less whacky. I have to say that I don't think we've ever done what I believed is the 'right thing' for our citizens as we have caved to the wackiness of the majority party."

"One more question. How did you decide which party to join yourself?"

He laughed. "That's a no-win proposition. In Capital City, the mayor is not allowed to belong to either party system so that's my free pass."

I closed our conversation. "Thanks, Mayor. You've been very helpful in guiding me to my final decision regarding our two-party system."

After my talk with Don, I thought more about what was actually happening. In our past system, I was concerned that elected officials may only represent a minority of the population. However, once these city council members were elected, they would need to accommodate the majority of the population or they would not be re-elected.

I addressed my city council in our next meeting. "I believe that it would

be best to abolish the two-party election system for Trial Town for the following reasons:

1) Parties have created a polarizing effect in our city council and in our communities that appears to force all to pick a side regardless of any logical direction for our city.

2) In city council meetings, both parties have taken diametrically opposed positions. And, each party won't relinquish their position to hear opposing views to work toward a viable compromise.

3) If we were to have a majority of any one party in our council, we would most likely be subject to some very whacky and ideologically biased decisions that wouldn't serve our citizens well and would create inefficiency in our government, as each majority party would try to undo what the previous majority party had done.

4) If any party member breaks rank with their party for rational reasons, they are threatened with no financial support by their party in upcoming elections.

5) Biases that affect important political decisions confuse the decisions that need to be made and are intended to enlist political support that's counter to conducting the business of Trial Town in a reasonable way.

Sally Hatfield spoke first. "Mayor, I'm somewhat confused. Why did you believe Trial Town would benefit from a two-party system in the first place?"

"I felt a larger percentage support in a general election would imply that elected city council members would better represent our citizens. Instead, I've found that parties and not politicians hold the actual political power in a two-party system."

Paul Fredrick chimed in. "I'm not sure I understand the problem with party influences."

"All parties have some very admirable principles in their respective platforms. Unfortunately, these ideals become polarizing forces on our board and in our community."

Paul asked, "What do you mean by 'polarizing'?"

"Let's take our recent sidewalk issue. One party wants to reduce taxes by \$10 per year per person while the other wants to increase taxes by \$10 per year per person. We simply need to build sidewalks. Polarization is when two sides establish untenable positions based on 'supposed' ideals and won't compromise."

Paul continued, "Are you saying that controlling spending is a bad thing?"

"Paul, controlling spending is important but it isn't the only thing that should drive city council decisions."

Sally interrupted. "Are you saying that you don't want parks for our city's citizens?"

"Sally, we have two large parks that seem to serve our citizens well. In addition, I don't think that most citizens of Trial Town can afford a large tax

increase.”

Sandy, a Trial Town Gazette reporter attending the city council meeting, spoke up. “What will happen to the current city council members?”

I responded. “I propose that we keep every member in their current position as elected and simply eliminate party titles. My sense is that we’ll have much more reasonable give-and-take discussions once parties have less say in the actions of individual members of this city council.”

I had expected a major battle; however, it appeared that most members seemed to understand my logic. I did get a lot of push back by party leaders though.

The Green Party president, Hal Sparks, spoke up. “Mayor, this is a complete outrage. These city council members were voted into office by large funding contributions by us parties. If the city council abolishes parties, I believe you are telling all party members that you don’t respect their decisions.”

“Hal, I believe that these same city council members would have most likely been elected even in our previous election system. Further, my sense is that even party voters aren’t happy with the stalemate that has resulted in our two-party system.”

The Red Party president, Grace Frampton, asked, “Mayor, if you abolish the two-party system, what do you propose the parties do with all of the funds we have raised to support our candidates?”

I was caught a little off guard by this question. “Grace, I believe the parties ought to fund future candidates that best reflect your individual ideals.”

Grace seemed less than pleased with my response.

After our discussion, we voted to repeal the two-party system law; the vote was unanimous 6-0. Grace Frampton and Hal Sparks were noticeably furious and continued to try to influence the city council members they elected. Eventually, both parties ran out of money as Trial Town citizens started to understand the same problems that our city council had discovered with the two-party system.

To try to establish more of a mandate for elected city council candidates, we established a two-tier election process. If a winning candidate got less than 45% of the total vote in the original election, we would hold an additional vote between the top two candidates. This would ensure that the winning candidate would receive a legitimate majority vote by all voters. Mayor Westland from Capital City thought that this was such a good idea that Capital City also abandoned their two-party system in favor of the two-tier voting process.

Real World Examples

The current US Congress, executive and judicial branches are highly polarized. The Republican Party and Democrat Party raise billions of dollars that can be utilized by their favorite candidates. We routinely have government shutdowns, budget impasses and gridlock whenever we get close to a balanced political system. When one party dominates the political scene, large, sweeping, highly partisan laws are passed as soon as these majority parties gain control.

One such legislation was the Affordable Care Act (Obama Care). The problem posed to all lawmakers was quite straightforward:

1) Health insurance costs for most Americans were out of control, increasing at double the cost of inflation on an annual basis, causing employers to drop coverage for most employees.

2) Most insurance companies that covered individuals under non-employer programs would not cover pre-existing conditions, eventually being virtually ineffective.

3) Low income earners could not afford health insurance in any form, as they simply did not have this added income if their employer would not pay up the cost.

The discussion of the healthcare topic became polarized very quickly, with Republicans indicating that they would not support any kind of national health care plan; and Democrats forcing through the resulting Affordable Care Act. There was limited conversation between Republicans and Democrats to arrive at a logical decision that considered both party's concerns. Democrats wanted to pass their law. Republicans wanted to stop the law with no alternative.

Now think about this for a minute. If our politicians had actually wrestled with the problems presented, understood the impact and how we could still solve most of the problems without creating a financially unsustainable system; wouldn't we all be better off?

So here we are with an unworkable solution.

Republican majorities make bad decisions as well. George W. Bush passed the Medicare Modernization Act in 2003 in the face of budget deficits that eventually grew to \$10 trillion in government debt by the time he exited office in 2008.

The voting public is somewhat aware that it is dangerous to have a complete majority of one party in power for any length of time. Among the last three presidents, Barack Obama, George Bush and Bill Clinton; each has enjoyed had their own party in power for only 25% of their collective years in office.

Polarization results in the elimination of logic and good analytical decisions. If you are a Democrat or Republican, you must vote with your

party or you are not considered a “team player.” This polarization not only affects politicians, but also is common in folks voting for politicians. If you ask most people why they voted for one candidate over the other, they would cite some emotional party line that’s quite ridiculous. When you question these folks a little further on specific issues and stances, they cannot rationalize their position. In fact, I believe this is why many people don’t like to discuss politics. They believe what they believe and find it difficult to defend their position. It’s like the old saying; “People buy on emotion and justify with logic”. My hope is that people will start to better understand issues and hold their politicians accountable for how they vote.... And not just on election day.