

Is Democracy Dead?

Just a few short months ago, during [his address to the nation on the crisis in Syria](#), President Obama referred to himself as “the president of the world’s oldest Constitutional democracy.”

Not so fast.

According to [a new study released by Princeton University](#), the government of the United States is not a democracy at all. After reviewing America’s public policy issues spanning a period of 20 years, researchers found that policy decisions more closely mirrored the will of the wealthy and privileged few, rather than that of the masses. Researchers compared the policy preferences of middle income Americans with that of our nation’s wealthiest citizens, as well as high-powered lobby groups and deep-pocketed corporations, and found that the opinions of the former were more often disregarded in favor of the latter. And now that the U.S. Supreme Court [has removed the cap](#) on how much an individual can donate during any given election cycle, it will be easier than ever for the rich to have more influence than their poorer counterparts.

Princeton researchers concluded that the United States’ current system of government—often touted as a [shining beacon](#) of democracy—is actually an oligarchy, which [is defined](#) as “a government in which a small group exercises control, especially for corrupt and selfish purposes.”

Surprised? You shouldn’t be. Back in January, the Vienna-based international non-profit [Global Democracy Ranking](#) organization released their annual listing of the greatest democracies in the world, and the United States [didn’t even crack the top 10](#). Our overall score was a dismal C+ (ranked an embarrassing 15th), based on an assessment of a variety of criteria, such as the quality of our government’s representation, freedom, and overall political knowledge.

These findings call to mind another Presidential address, given in 1863 at Gettysburg, when Abraham Lincoln implored Americans in the midst of a Civil War to preserve the tenets of democracy upon which our country was founded, to be unafraid of standing up for what they believe in, in order to ensure that the “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

If we now live in a country where the will of a select few supersedes the will of the average citizen, has the time finally come to sound the death knell for Democracy in the U.S.?



About Lisa Yakomin

Lisa Yakomin, a national freelance writer for over 25 years, has been actively involved in politics and government since her first stint as a campaign volunteer at 10 years old. She recently served as a senior aide in the New Jersey State Legislature, and continues to advocate for a variety of social and political causes.