

Are the strategies we've employed for building retirement nest eggs transferable to self-government? Is a democratic republic compatible with the political industrial complex? Is it possible for the ordinary citizen to reclaim a meaningful and influential role in the political system?

ALTOONA, WI - Mutual funds exist for good reasons. When people are saving up for retirement, if they are lucky and if they are smart they have something more than what they've paid in to Social Security. Maybe they have a 401(k). Or maybe a 403(b). Or an IRA of some kind. Or a SEP. Whatever they have, they typically don't have enough time on their hands to research where best to invest the funds or to execute the transactions. Nor do most of us feel qualified to manage these accounts.



So we put our money in a mutual fund, in the hands of professional money managers. This way, you can invest your money without the time or the experience needed to invest wisely. Theoretically at least, you should get a better return by giving your money to a professional than you would if you chose investments yourself. There is still risk. There's always risk. But it beats stuffing your life's savings in a mattress.

For roughly the same reasons, politics has largely been handed over to professionals. As populations continue to grow and life gets more complicated and communications technologies become more advanced and demanding, it is more and more challenging for someone with a life outside of politics to be an active and involved citizen. Increasingly, people who don't practice politics for a living feel they have neither the time nor the qualifications to be actively engaged. Consequently, democracy has been outsourced to professional managers. A vast political consulting industry has enveloped our political system, and it has become a multi-billion dollar racket

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There are survey research professionals to measure public opinion. There are messaging professionals to write scripts and put words in the mouths of candidates for office and elected officials. There are marketing professionals who sell policies and politicians the way beer and potato chips are sold. There are electioneering professionals who turn voter identification, persuasion and turnout into an intricate, algorithmic science. There are policy professionals who sit in offices on one coast and write laws for states and local communities on the other side of the country and all points in between. And, of course, there are the professional money managers who make sure all the consulting fees get paid and the obscene profits get turned.

All of this begs a number of questions:

Are the strategies we've employed for building retirement nest eggs transferable to self-government?

Is a democratic republic compatible with the political industrial complex?

Is it possible for the ordinary citizen – the amateur – to reclaim a meaningful and influential role in a political system presently overrun by professionals?

My answers:

No.

Absolutely not.

It has to be. The alternative is too dismal a fate.