

Blue Jean Nation - "You and I can't run for governor"

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Is it realistic for people who are truly reflective of the general public to run for governor, the House of Representatives? Doesn't seem so. That's because nearly all Americans can't realistically run for major political office. Our country is the poorer for it.

ALTOONA, WI - Representation is the foundation our political system is supposed to be built on. For authentic representation to be possible, it has to be realistic for people who are truly reflective of the general public to run for office.

By this measure, you can see that American democracy is on very thin ice when you consider what's involved in seeking and holding an office like governor.

Those doing the campaigning in Wisconsin's last election for governor spent [well over \\$80 million](#). The popular assumption is that candidates need to have as much money as their opponents — or close to it — to be taken seriously. That thinking is mistaken, but widely accepted. That fact alone leaves nearly everyone on the outside looking in. Only a select few are able to put millions of dollars of their own money into a political campaign. Among the multitudes who can't, most are unwilling to sell out their beliefs and principles to win over special interests capable of supplying them with the financing to compete.

Not having a personal fortune or a willingness to take out a second mortgage on your soul is not the only characteristic separating those who can run from others like you and me who can't. Elections for governor are partisan contests, and America has a two-party system. The major parties expect candidates to join their ranks. Most Americans are [turned off by both major parties](#) at the moment, and have no interest in joining one. Candidates not only are supposed to be dues-paying party

members, they are expected to take the position that their party can do no wrong and the other party can do no right. You and I and most Americans don't believe that and aren't comfortable pretending that we do.

There's another thing about getting to be governor that might not rub you the wrong way, but it does me. Governors are supposed to be public servants. To my way of thinking, serving in public office puts you below the people you are elected to represent, not above them. In Wisconsin, getting elected governor entitles you to a salary of close to \$150,000 a year, [more than three times](#) what the average worker makes. Governors take up residence in a 20,000 square foot lakefront mansion. Servant quarters it is not.

Never in my life have I made \$150,000 in a year, and I can't imagine getting such a lofty salary at taxpayer expense just for winning an election. One dollar less than the earnings of the average worker has a better ring to it. I've never lived in a mansion, and wouldn't feel right moving into one in the name of public service. Governors should pay for their own housing, just like everyone else.

Putting governors up on a pedestal is only one way the ideal of representation is debased. Ever notice how the House of Representatives is not remotely representative of the American electorate? As a whole, the House's membership is far older, richer, whiter and more likely to be male than the average American. That's because nearly all Americans can't realistically run for the office. Our country is the poorer for it.

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