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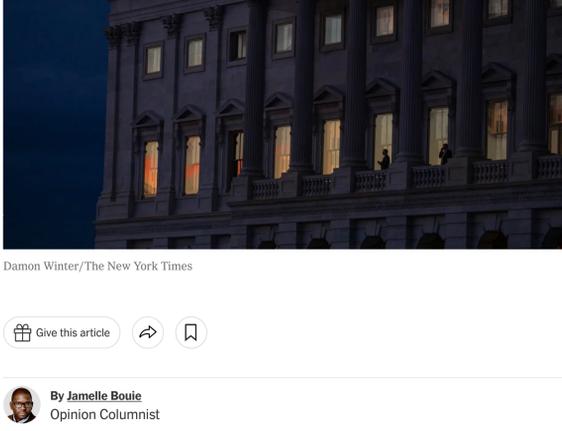
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Jamelle Bouie

OPINION

You Want to Clean Up the House? Same Here

July 30, 2022



Damon Winter/The New York Times



By **Jamelle Bouie**
Opinion Columnist

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A lot of you responded quite strongly to last week's newsletter on defanging the Senate of most of its power. Not a negative response, necessarily — you just had a lot of ideas! And as it happens, I agree with many of those ideas. Perhaps the most common one is related less to the Senate than to the House of Representatives. Many of you were adamant that if the goal is to bring the locus of policymaking back to the House, then the House, too, must be more democratic than it is, and that part of making the House more democratic is ending partisan gerrymandering.

I agree! But I think we should go further. Even if you end partisan gerrymandering for House (and just as crucially state legislative) elections, you're still left with the real culprit for many of our political dysfunctions: single-member districts and “first past the post” voting. As long as you elect single members by individual district, there is a risk of malapportionment. And as long as you have “first past the post” voting — where candidates can win with a plurality of the vote — there's little to no chance that a third party could succeed in an election (something I explore in my most recent column).

One solution is just to get rid of districts altogether. Or if you'd prefer to keep districts, divide each state into a number of multi-member districts, in which voters elect multiple candidates using a form of preference voting. Ranked-choice voting has made some inroads here in the United States, but I am a fan of approval voting, in which voters can cast a vote for as many candidates as they'd like that are on the ballot. Whoever gets the most votes — or in a multi-member district, the top vote getters — wins a seat in Congress.

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Now, approval voting is a little more complicated than this — and there are different forms of approval voting that, for example, allow voters to mark the intensity of their preference — but these are the basics. One advantage of approval voting is that it is more likely to produce winners with broad support across the electorate. Another advantage is that it allows third parties to compete without “spoiling” the election in favor of a candidate who doesn't have majority support. (Although, in some circumstances, approval voting can produce plurality winners.)

In any case, an expanded House (again, to at least 600 members) without gerrymandering and with a multitude of parties would be a great counterpart to a Senate that can amend legislation, but not veto it. Thank you, readers, for the feedback, which I found very helpful as I think through these ideas.

What I Wrote

[My Friday column](#) was a skeptical look at the new third party proposed by Andrew Yang and his allies and an analysis of third-party success in the United States, using the Free Soil Party as my case study.

Why am I so confident that the Forward Party will amount to nothing? Because there is a recipe for third-party success in the United States, but neither Yang nor his allies have the right ingredients.

I was also [a guest on the Five-Four podcast](#), where I discussed the Democratic Party's reaction to the Supreme Court's decision overturning Roe v. Wade.

Now Reading

[Harold Meyerson](#) makes the case for abolishing state senates for The American Prospect.

[Dan Kaufman](#) on Wisconsin's war on democracy for The New Yorker.

[Fintan O'Toole](#) on what Ireland can tell Americans about the efficacy of abortion bans for The New York Review of Books.

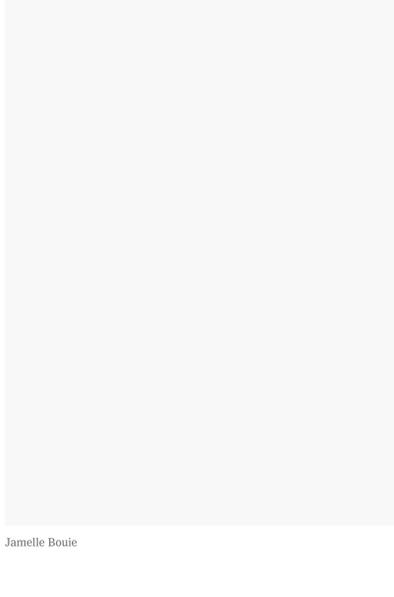
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[Jennifer Wilson](#) on a new biography of the poet Claude McKay for Dissent magazine.

[Heather Berg](#) on sex workers for Boston Review.

Feedback If you're enjoying what you're reading, please consider recommending it to your friends. [They can sign up here.](#) If you want to share your thoughts on an item in this week's newsletter or on the newsletter in general, please email me at jamelle-newsletter@nytimes.com. You can follow me on Twitter ([@jbouie](#)), [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#).

Photo of the Week



Jamelle Bouie

Many generations of UVA students have eaten many greasy hamburgers at this spot. It's a bona fide institution.

Now Eating: Black-eyed Peas with Tomatoes

This recipe, provided by Sandra A. Gutierrez, is from the “[Beans & Field Peas](#)” edition of the [Savor the South](#) series of cookbooks. She says that it comes from the book “[Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South](#)” by Marcie Cohen-Ferris, and that it is traditionally served with a Sephardic dish of rice and tomatoes. I served this dish over heirloom “Bloody Butcher” red grits from [Deep Roots Milling](#) in Nelson County, Va. It was a great meal. It makes six to eight servings as a side dish and three to four as a main course.

A few notes: I've adjusted the recipe a bit to account for my tastes. I should also say that when I made this, I rendered fat from a few slices of bacon and cooked the vegetables in the bacon fat instead of using olive oil. If you eat pork, I recommend going that route.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large tomato, peeled and chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups fresh or frozen black-eyed peas (about 20 ounces)
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups water or stock, with more as needed

Directions

In a large, heavy saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring often, until tender, about five minutes. Add the tomato, thyme, salt and pepper and cook, stirring often, until the tomato softens, another five minutes. Stir in the black-eyed peas and water; bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, partially cover and simmer until the peas are tender, about 30 minutes. Taste for seasoning. Serve over rice or grits.

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