

The author's idea is basically this: We should create a third legislative branch, consisting of 43,500 citizens chosen by lot. There are two versions of this idea. The first would be to create a citizens' Assembly, which would convene two to three times per month in each of the 435 House districts. Every two years, a lottery would select each Assembly district's one hundred members (reluctant citizens could opt out). In exchange for nothing more than a per diem to cover expenses, these Assembly members would discuss issues in depth. Well-timed polls of the Assembly would be reported to public officials to influence pending legislation. The second version of this proposal is the People's House, a citizen body with sharper teeth. Built like the Assembly, this House could introduce a few bills each session, pull dying bills out of committee for a floor vote, and reject legislation by majority vote (overridden by a three-fifths vote in the House or Senate).

A citizen steering committee would set the agenda for these citizen bodies. Each year, every district would nominate one of its Assembly members for the committee, and 25 of those chosen at random would join the steering committee for two years. The first year of service would be learning the ropes, and the second year would confer real authority, such as choosing which bills for the People's House to review.

Within this basic structure, O'Leary admits that there exists a range of possibilities. As he says modestly, "I offer one possible blueprint; others will offer theirs" (p. 12). In this spirit, one tweak he might consider is providing sufficient pay and job protections to ensure assembly participation from low-wage workers who hold high-pressure jobs.

Among the most original details in O'Leary's blueprint is the grouping of Assembly districts into six geographic regions, then randomly matching each district up with one from every other region. This would create 72 quasi-national Assemblies with sister-city connections. This would wonderfully complicate the "Better Know a District" segment on *The Colbert Report*, but it would also facilitate workable, wired national conversations.

In tallying the benefits of Assemblies, O'Leary argues that they would give the public a space in which to exercise its voice, provide a system to promote public deliberation over special-interest politics, and break through legislative gridlock. Popular and sound ideas would reach floor votes in Congress, and elected officials might find passage of such bills irresistible, owing either to public pressure or the political cover provided by the Assembly. To argue for the plausibility of his proposal, O'Leary demonstrates how the citizen Assemblies could draw on our deepest political traditions. Both Madison and Jefferson would see something they like, and the assemblies fit within our constitutional framework and modern deliberative theories of democracy. The point O'Leary endeavors to make is that his idea may be novel, but it is by no means heretical.

Even if it has a hidden pedigree, is the United States—or any country—ready for this idea? There is circumstantial evidence that the timing is right. British Columbia and Ontario have empanelled randomly selected Citizen Assemblies to write electoral reforms to be put before voters, much like an initiative in the United States. Brazil now has a constitutional requirement for citizen participation in budgeting and administration that goes further than perhaps any nation before it. Meanwhile, citizen juries, deliberative polls, and other citizen-centered reforms have continued to proliferate. Perhaps a nation, state, or province will soon be ready for a People's House.

What O'Leary does not provide, but would surely be delighted to see, is a clearer road map to implement his ideas for institutionalizing a space for influential citizen deliberation that can reawaken the public's civic spirit. It is likely that he underestimates the resistance of the major parties to his reform. Republicans reflexively cry foul at any growth in government's scope, even if it has a modest price tag (O'Leary estimates \$15 million to \$50 million in annual expenses). Leaders in both parties are also likely to reject any serious threat to a status quo that both sides believe, in their heart, favors their own party. Special interests accustomed to easy access to government will likely resist the idea with even more ferocity, and as the author himself acknowledges, there is no reason to doubt their power.

Despair, however, would be contrary to the optimistic spirit of the democratic project. O'Leary's book offers us a new idea to consider, and I hope it will inspire practical theorizing and campaigning that will close the gap between the imperfect present and a modestly less imperfect future.

True Faith and Allegiance: Immigration and American Civic Nationalism.

By Noah Pickus. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. 272p. \$35.00 cloth, \$22.95 paper. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707071903

— James Simeone, *Illinois Wesleyan University*

Is civic nationalism an oxymoron? Noah Pickus does not think so, at least not in America. Here, the best leaders have been able to combine a "rational commitment to a common creed based on abstract ideals" with a moderate nationalism valuing "tradition, inherited opinion, and a set of obligations that flow from sharing a distinctive history and culture" (p. 5). Civic nationalism, he argues, is possible in theory and has been achieved in practice. At pivotal moments in American history, leaders like James Madison and Theodore Roosevelt found a way for "civic principles and American nationalism" to reinforce each other (p. 5). Pickus calls for a new emphasis on civic nationalism in our time and cautions against too quickly dividing "civic nationalist positions into civic *or* national positions alone" (p. 125). In this carefully argued if not always persuasive book, he counsels a prudent policy of

balancing “the universal thrust of civic principles” with “the particularist bond of nationalist sentiment” (p. 62). He bravely challenges a new generation of civic nationalists to fight for that balance today.

The majority of the book pursues the project of recovering the neglected history of civic nationalism during the Founding and Progressive eras. Separate chapters treat the Naturalization Act of 1790, the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, the Americanization movement before World War I, and the turn toward coercion after the war. The moral of the story in these chapters is that civic nationalism, while never uniform and at times precariously expressed, was expressed nonetheless; often, he argues, it made the difference between illiberal excesses and merely restrictive policies. He concludes the book with a review of the contemporary debate over immigration. He criticizes four popular approaches: rights-based; group representation; cultural nationalism (i.e., ethnic nationalism); and universal nationalism. Instead, we should follow Madison’s “supple and versatile nationalism [which avoided] the problems posed both by too strong and too weak a sense of national identity” (p. 148).

Pickus’s method in the historical chapters is “to explore the moral views embedded in . . . political practices [and in the] complex, local dimensions tied to the history and culture of particular communities” (p. 190, n. 28 quoting Joseph Carens). The method works best when he is dealing with individual actors. When he gets to parties like the Federalists or large groups like “the Founders,” a fallacy of composition creeps into the analysis. For instance, Pickus writes: “[T]he Founders left unresolved the question of whether civic nationalism [can rely on history] as a binding agent [and] still account for the tensions within that history” (p. 63). But he never specifies which Founders he means or the process by which the group came to this lack of resolution.

Pickus would concede that there is no single Founding view of American identity; he is more concerned with what results from “political practices.” The racist “free white person” clause of the 1790 Naturalization Act and the illiberal Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, he suggests, were the result of a coalition politics in which civic nationalists failed to produce a moderate majority. Following Rogers M. Smith in this regard, he sees U.S. liberal nationalism as a work in progress. Given the accepted distinction between natural and civil rights, the issue of membership in the political community became a civil matter to be decided by majority opinion. At best, naturalization and citizenship rules result from a two-way negotiation between the majority and newcomers. “True faith and allegiance”—first required in a 1906 naturalization oath—has been abused as much as honored by both parties in the negotiation (p. 171).

Nevertheless, American naturalization policy has never been uniformly illiberal; rather, civic nationalists in the

American past have often been forced by political practice to compromise. Such was the case, Pickus argues, in 1796 when St. George Tucker opted for gradual emancipation for the slaves because of existing “prejudice” of racist public opinion. While limited as an inclusive strategy, Pickus still sees Tucker’s position as a successful balancing act because it “offered a compelling alternative to far more illiberal, exclusionary policies” like further entrenchment of slavery or forced colonization (p. 63). Others argued against emancipation, even though they saw slavery as contrary to the principles of the Declaration, because they wanted to foster a “cohesive community” (p. 53). In the end, civic nationalism is as much about “self-preservation” as it is about “justice” (p. 58).

Pickus often finds a “civic” side to arguments that appear illiberal. When the American Protective Association (circa 1887) argued against Catholic immigration on the grounds that members of the religious group lack experience with self-government, he sees a legitimate civic concern as well as an illiberal group characterization. But one might as persuasively argue that in this case, a nativist Protestant group is seeking power by making an appeal to the liberally minded. Here as in many other cases, Pickus does not provide enough contextual “political practice” for us to judge. Yet the difference is crucial to an assessment of his key premise that “there was no straight-line relation between civic principles and inclusion, or nationalist sentiment and exclusion” (pp. 68–69).

He takes a similar stance in his review of the Progressives. Why promote ethnic nationalists like Theodore Roosevelt when people like John Dewey and Randolph Bourne take civic positions which, Pickus acknowledges, are devoid of ethnic nationalist tendencies? The answer, it seems, is that those who fail to compromise fail to make a difference. The author’s motto might be: “Better to get your hands dirty and make a small difference than defend your view of the truth from the sidelines.” Roosevelt fought the good fight before falling prey to ideas of racial evolution and rejecting the civic ideal of allegiance as a “mutual process of exchange” (p. 120). The Americanization movement also failed in the end to maintain a “moderate civic nationalist” position. Nonetheless Pickus sees the movement as successful partly because it “seemed to reduce the concerns of native-born citizens” for so long (p. 122).

This book is the result of a careful mind—a mind informed by history and political context, one not given to sweeping generalizations. But it is a mind, like Madison’s, in which prudence trumps conscience. In the preface, the author quotes a reminder from his brother Josh that “prudence is a virtue only in moderation” (p. xiii). Readers skeptical of the empirical validity of the civil/ethnic nationalism distinction will wish that the author had listened more to his brother. Nonetheless, it is one of the virtues of this book that it will inspire heartfelt and serious debate, brotherly or otherwise.