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EMBARGOED UNTIL OCTOBER 12, 2021

October 4, 2021

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New national organization, [Veterans for Political Innovation](https://veteransforpoliticalinnovation.org), launches today in Madison, Wisconsin to fight political polarization. Elected Officials On-Hand: “It all starts here...”

MADISON, WISCONSIN – Veterans for Political Innovation, a new movement to fight political polarization and dysfunction, officially launches today, October 13th, 2021, with over 50 people in attendance at an event overlooking the Wisconsin state capitol. With dignitaries including Dick Leinenkugel, State Rep. Tony Kurtz, State Sen. Dale Kooyenga, and others, the event marks the launch of a national organization advocating for elections innovations to ensure all military veterans' voices are heard. VPI's mission starts in Wisconsin where an innovative bill (S.B. 250, A.B. 244) for "[Final-Five Voting](#)" is pending.

“We feel the weight of our generational responsibility to urgently address the paralyzing dysfunction and polarization we witness each day in Washington, DC,” says Eric Bronner, a Navy veteran and founder of Veterans for Political Innovation. “We are clear on the solution to address polarization, and now with early funding, a strong board and team, and Todd Connor’s national reputation and leadership we are poised to aggressively step forward as military veterans to say enough is enough.”

“Like most Americans and in particular as a military veteran, I’m distraught at the current state of affairs. This polarization is neither normal, nor cyclical, and we have to take a systems-level view at how we fix it. The primary election has become the primary problem in American politics,” says Todd Connor, a Navy veteran, nationally recognized social entrepreneur, and now CEO of Veterans for Political Innovation. “The Economist Intelligence Unit ranks the U.S. 25th among countries as a ‘Flawed Democracy’ on par with Portugal, Estonia, and Italy and behind countries we would consider our peers. Reinvigorating competition into our politics, breaking the binary race-to-the-bottom nature of our current political construct, and changing the incentives for candidates and elected officials is how we fix this. Fortunately, we have a path and a plan to do just that. And it all starts here in Wisconsin...”

To launch the effort, Veterans for Political Innovation has been quietly building grassroots support amongst the military community and highlighting elected officials who are committed to improving our democratic system. “In American politics, winning isn’t winning unless the other side is losing, and losing badly. This shouldn’t be. And it doesn’t have to be.” — U.S. Reps. Mike Gallagher, Republican from Green Bay, and Chrissy Houlahan, Democrat from Pennsylvania, in their forward to the book: “The Politics Industry”, by Katherine M. Gehl and Michael E. Porter in which they argue that – for the sake of saving our American democracy – it’s time for voters to change the rules.

Thankfully, two state senators – Republican Dale Kooyenga and Democrat Jeff Smith — and two state representatives — Democrat Daniel Reimer and Republican Tony Kurtz — circulated a bill in March, to advance a change of rules for federal elections in Wisconsin. Other innovative proposals have been introduced in 28 states so far this year, according to FairVote, a nonpartisan group that advocates for ranked-choice voting as a way to improve elections. Maine became the first state to use ranked-choice voting for a presidential election last year and is the only state that currently has it in place for congressional elections as well. “At least forty other jurisdictions use ranked-choice voting (RCV), according to FairVote, including six southern states that use RCV for their military and overseas ballots. ‘If RCV is good enough for our military abroad, then certainly it’s good enough for us here at home,’” says Eric Bronner.

“Wisconsin has a rich and proud tradition of political innovation, and we know that if we can start the movement here, other states will take notice,” argues Connor. “The consequences of not taking action are too dire. We must do the hard work of innovating our elections to make them more competitive, more accountable, and more vibrant. That’s how you end polarization. That’s how you create a thriving American democracy.”

About Veterans for Political Innovation

Vision:

A competitive American democracy where everyday citizens are incentivized and excited to participate.

Mission:

To mobilize veterans and their supporters to advocate for election innovations to make our system less toxic and more competitive.

Strategy:

Implement Final Five Voting in all 50 states, starting in Wisconsin, leveraging volunteer leaders on the ground to tell their story to state legislators, collect signatures for ballot initiatives, and activate grassroots messaging campaigns.

Key Facts:

- “Veterans are more likely to be politically independent than the general population. Nearly half (49%) of all U.S. veterans ... do not identify with a major party.”
- Ranked-choice Voting is used in six (6) southern states for military and overseas ballots, preventing thousands of wasted or spoiled ballots every election cycle.
- Partisan primaries disenfranchise voters. In the 2020 election,
 - In 10 states, nearly 11 million independent voters were prohibited from participating in either party’s primaries altogether.
 - Only 23 million of America’s 235 million voters (10%) effectively elected 83% of Congress.