



Written by [Staff](#) on November 6, 2017

Published in the November 6, 2017 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 33, No. 21

Letters to the Editor

Republic or Democracy?

Every day across the United States, thousands of citizens recite the Pledge of Allegiance, including the line “and to the Republic for which it stands.”

The word “republic” is otherwise almost never used in speech, and rarely when referring to government. The word “democracy” is substituted for “republic” in legislative halls, universities, city councils, public schools, etc. If the words are the same, why don’t we simply use the word “democracy” in the pledge?

We don’t because they are different. Webster’s defines “democracy” as “government by the people: government in which the supreme power is retained by the people and exercised either directly (absolute or pure democracy) or indirectly (representative democracy) through a system of representation.” The U.S. government is usually referred to as a “representative democracy.”

On the other hand, Webster’s defines a “republic” as “a state in which the sovereign power resides in a certain body of people (the electorate) and is exercised by representatives elected by, and responsible to, them.”

The difference is subtle but significant. A democracy gives supreme power to the people through the mechanism of voting, allowing representatives to exercise that power for them. The representatives then make legislation reflecting what the electorate wants. This is government by the majority, or as some politico more aptly put it, “mob rule.”

In a “republic” democracy ends at the voting booth. Once elected, our representatives are bound by a strict set of guidelines. These rules are known as the Constitution. To the Founders’ credit and our good fortune, the Constitution was written as a document to restrain government, not give license to free rein.

The Pledge refers to “liberty and justice for all.” Here lies the essence of the republican form of government. In our Republic, representatives are obligated to consider the rights of all people and, if necessary, oppose the majority. It is a constant check and balance.

Put another way, a democracy operates for the desires of the majority at any given time, and a republic for the equitable management of a nation.

The Founders had studied history and the demise of nations and concluded that it was the nature of a democracy to eventually disintegrate into confusion, chaos, and, ultimately, collapse.

In a republic, lawmakers are confined to enacting legislation that does not violate rights enumerated in the Constitution, which says much about what may not be legislated.

It remains to the electorate to make sure their legislators stay within the confines of the Constitution.

History provides this exchange between a citizen and Benjamin Franklin as he was leaving the Constitutional Convention: “What kind of government did you give us, Mr. Franklin?” He replied: “A Republic, if you can keep it.”

Jonathan Lesh



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Grants Pass, Oregon

Healthcare Hell

It is so frustrating to listen to American legislators talk about the benefits of “single-payer healthcare for all” and not hear anyone challenge them on the fate of Charlie Gard, the boy U.K. doctors let die rather than allow his parents to get him experimental treatment (at no charge to the government). If we have single-payer healthcare, we will all be faced with the consequence of hospitals and government prohibiting us from seeking care (even if we have the personal funds to do so) for our family members deemed terminal and from taking our family members home to die with us.

Teresa McCroskey

Republic, Missouri



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