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## TODAY'S "SHORT TOPIC"

### **GRIDLOCK: DID OUR FOUNDERS PROVIDE FOR IT ..... ON PURPOSE?**



By Stephen L. Bakke  February 6, 2016

#### *Here's what provoked me:*

*A series of commentary and letters led to an enlightened opinion offered by D.J. Tice. He reminded us all of the concept of "checks and balances" and gave thanks by stating "As radicals arise, gridlock never looked so good." I wanted to offer my congratulations to Tice on his insight and conclusions. And I thank the paper for permitting his opinion to surface.*

#### *Here's my response:*

#### **Gridlock: Did Our Founders Provide for It ..... on Purpose?**

Lawrence Jacobs advised us why our chosen presidential candidates may not reflect a majority of Americans ("How 'We the people' came back to bite" – January 24). We learned that too few people are involved in the selection process, resulting in candidates "many will find too partisan and ideological." Letter writers (January 31) recall Jacobs analysis and bemoan our election and political processes that lead to stalemate and dysfunction.

In that morose atmosphere arose great insight from D.J. Tice ("As radicals arise, gridlock never looked so good," January 31). He paraphrased James Madison: "Whatever unchecked powers we grant to government, or any one branch of government – statesmen will not always be at helm." Madison foresaw the possibility of presidential candidates being "grim, self-proclaimed revolutionist and socialist Bernie Sanders" or "narcissistic nationalist strong man Donald Trump." Tice is thankful that "Madison and other framers.....left us a government explicitly designed with the likelihood of future immoderate and intemperate leadership in mind."

Tice wisely reminded us of the "checks and balances" introduced by our Founders to protect against tyranny of a thin majority and to make transformational change very difficult and messy. Reading the debates and writings of the time, we can see how today's legislative "grid-lock" can be the natural and painful, but intended result of separation of powers and checks and balances. What has recently happened, like it or not, is a return to restraining any governmental branch that is committed to acting unilaterally.

I congratulate Tice on his insight and conclusions.