

Wolves, Checks, Balances

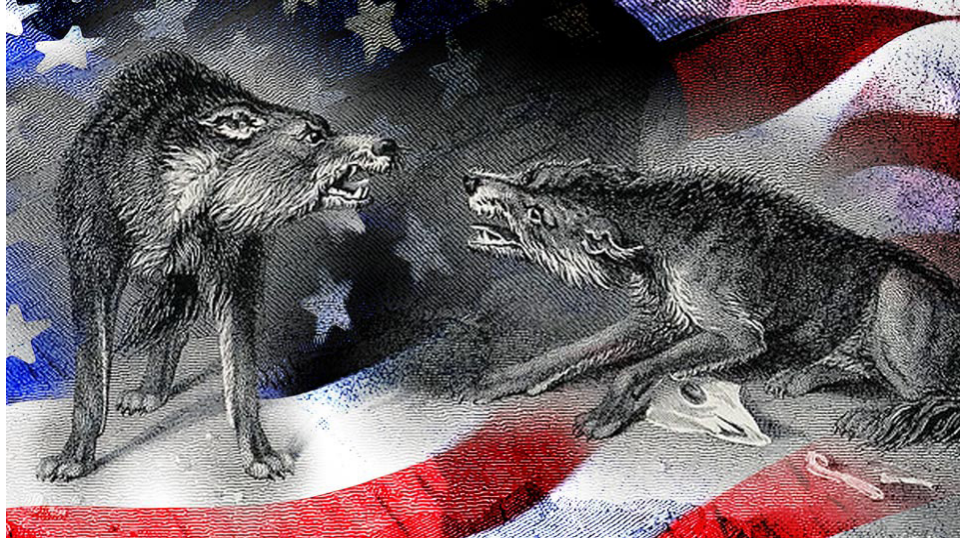
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“Propositions are a pure democracy,” Allen Thomas declares, “and a threat to the rights of our republic.”

Citizen-initiated ballot measures, he contends, “bypass the system.”

Thomas’s wrongheaded essay — completely outside any right-minded head — “A Proposition To End Ballot Propositions,” appeared on the website of KLZ 560 AM talk show host Kim Monson.

Thomas, an author and commentator in Colorado, refers to the electorate as “the mob” and offers the old standby wolves-and-sheep-voting analogy. “Our Republic works,” informs Mr. Thomas, “because we bypass a direct democracy and



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instead balance the power of legislation between the state legislature and the governorship. It is a system of checks and balances.”

Yet, he does not mention the most critical check

on both citizen-initiated and legislative lawmaking: judicial review. We have courts that protect our rights against encroachment in law. In fact, in the real world, it seems the courts are far more demanding in reviewing initiatives for constitutional violations than the bills legislatures pass.

Mr. Thomas also ignores that so many reforms — term limits jump to mind — would be impossible if only politicians acted.

Worse still, is the defeatism. “Progressives . . . are much better at it,” he concedes, adding “We also cannot count on the Colorado populace to think more reasonably.”

So, Thomas wants to “abolish” citizen initiatives.

More hopeful is George Mason University Professor Ilya Somin. “Referendums are a promising tool for libertarian progress,” argues Somin at *Reason*, “one with a proven record of success.” No need for despair.

“Much can be done,” Somin adds, “to build on that record and extend it.”

He’s right: Don’t be discouraged; take the initiative!

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.