

Democracy Fail?

September 22, 2021

“California recall fails,” *The Visalla Times Delta* explained. As did KSBY, the NBC affiliate in San Luis Obispo. Not to mention *The New York Daily News* and *The Chicago Sun-Times*.

FiveThirtyEight analyzed “the failed California recall” at length. Even the *South China Morning Post* proclaimed the apparent democratic malfunction (reprinting an *Agence France-Press* report).

Yet the recall *did not fail*.

Sure, voters decided not to jettison Governor Newsom mid-term. But that’s not a failure of this century-old democratic check on power — not unless a whole

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bunch of the 64 percent voting to keep Newsom filled in the wrong oval on their ballot by mistake.

I almost wish that were so; it would be easier to correct going forward.

“In a state famous for its acts of direct democracy,” a *New York Times* feature informs, “detractors of



this year’s special election say the recall process is democracy gone off the rails, a distraction from crises that require the government’s attention, and a waste of hundreds of millions of dollars.”

Some folks never complain about government spending until it comes to the cost of holding an election. Funny, that’s precisely when our money might actually be *well* spent.

“No one in the state’s Democratic leadership is suggesting the elimination of recalls,” *The Times* notes, merely “vowing to make it more difficult for them to qualify for the ballot.”

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“In a sharp piece of political irony,” that *Times*’ piece bemoans, “it will take a referendum to decide whether to change this particular referendum.”

Which is a *feature* of the system, not a *bug*. That is, *no fail there*.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.