

The third of Timothy Snyder's *Tyranny* lessons from the twentieth century is BEWARE THE ONE-PARTY STATE. His opening paragraph of this chapter says it best: "The parties that remade states and suppressed rivals were not omnipotent from the start. ....So support the multi-party system and defend the rules of democratic elections."

This chapter seems very relevant now, when one faction in our country, and the one that is presently controlling the national administration, is openly trying to suppress voting and disrupt the electoral process. Absentee or mail-in voting—no difference in the two, though Trump seems not to understand (or, at least, acknowledge) this, is crucial this year when going to the polls has a real health risk for many Americans. And, though the election is the event on the minds of most people in this country, the attack on the postal system has other ramifications, as well. People depend on the mail for medicines, bills, and still—in spite of the internet—for news and communications. The disruption of the postal system is, in my view, an act of domestic terrorism perpetrated by Trump and his postmaster general DeJoy.

But, this chapter in Snyder's important little book is more than about this coming national election. Supporting a multi-party system can, and should, begin at the local level. In our area, a Republican nomination for an office is a guarantee of winning an office. This should not be happening. When people who want to serve in a local capacity know that they must run as Republicans, even if they are not affiliated with that party, it is just plain wrong. Burdell Township and Osceola County elected positions usually have no list of candidates except on the Republican side of the ballot. The primary election is, in effect, the electing process, not the nominating preliminary to the general election.

This we could change. It might require some sacrifices at first, accepting that our opposition ticket would not prevail in any office. But, with quality people—local folks everybody knows—running for township offices, for county positions, for sheriff—this could change. And, it should. I believe one action we could take to follow the lesson of Snyder's third chapter—to beware the one-party state—is to encourage an opposition slate of officers the next time local elections come around. We may not win at first, and some of our good neighbors may be angry at us, but it is a real step toward reclaiming our democracy.