Widener University Delaware Law School

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What's Wrong with US Political System?

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What's wrong with US political system?

America faces some of the most daunting challenges it has ever faced. Its economy is stuck in a deep recession. Its government is mired in debt. The country's military influence is waning, and its children are unprepared to compete in the global economy.

And ominously looming in the background is the threat of global warming with potentially catastrophic environmental effects.

Yet just as these challenges continue to mount, the nation's political system seems incapable of addressing them.

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Politicians appear more concerned with partisan advantage than with bi-partisan solutions. And the tsunami of money flowing into political campaigns has made fundraising a higher priority than governing.

What's gone wrong? How do we get out of this mess?

Is the problem merely one of behavior: that politicians are so hyper-partisan they are incapable of working across the aisle?

If so, could voters solve the problem by ousting the extremists and insisting on a culture of cooperation (i.e., returning to a time when Democrats and Republicans shared drinks at the end of a day's work)?

Or is the problem more systemic, perhaps even embedded in the Constitution itself? Could it be that our Constitution's vaunted checks and balances have become a recipe for gridlock?

Could it be that a different system, say a parliamentary one, would be more effective?

Or might the blame for our system's failure lie with the Supreme Court, which has chosen to find limits on campaign expenditures unconstitutional but not thus far to find political gerrymandering unconstitutional?

We at Widener University School of Law and The News Journal asked some of the most prominent politicians and scholars in the country whether they think our political system is broken, and if so, what needs to be done to fix it?

Is the problem merely the current culture in Washington? Is it that voters are inadequately informed or fail to show up at the voting booth?

Or is the problem more systemic and perhaps even partially found in the Constitution?

Alan Garfield is a professor at Widener University School of Law and the author of The New Journal's "Bench Press" column.