

Plethora of presidents

Forget the elections, let nine of those who have already run our country do it again



Imagine if you will, in these high times of technology and cosmic wizardry, that America was able to revive its old leaders and change the government.

We still have the Constitution, with all perks, privileges and laws therein remaining intact, except for one:

The executive branch is now the executive tribunal — complete with our current bureaucracy, but now instead of one president, we have nine open spots, waiting to be filled by the only truly qualified candidates: the 42 men who have held the office of the Presidency of the United States.

Less is more, especially in talking candidates.

We rewrite the election codes, put all of our previous presidents up for office (or those who would agree to be nominated and then agree to run — sorry, Lyndon B. Johnson. Unless you'd like another go-round, LBJ?). Richard Nixon gets another chance, and so does William Henry Harrison, who had just one month in office.

We bring back both Roosevelts, Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton and Grover Cleveland, for a chance to serve some consecutive terms.

And while the 20th may be the greatest century of them all, and the presidents who ruled over it the most in-tune leaders of all time, it is still only the most recent in a series of innumerable centuries.

In more than 200 years of the American presidency, we've had some greats and some not-so-greats. While you're poring over your opinions of our current chief executive and agonizing over the decision of who the next should be, why not take this cosmic vote for the American oligarchy?

Of course, everyone's got to be elected by a standard top-nine-vote-getters-win election. So who gets the nod?

Think of an Oval Office crammed with desks. The name plates read: JFK, Ike, Jackson, Madison, Nixon, Washington, Jefferson, FDR and Lincoln.

A motley crew, right? But they're perfect for each other, and all of them are electable.

We've got to think charisma here. Presidents with pep, with zip and whose indiscretions were not of the reported caliber of Clinton's.

With that, John F. Kennedy's perfect. A Democrat, our 35th president (1961-1963) is on the board. He staved off nuclear war, launched the race to the moon and saw the greatest expansion of civil rights since the Reconstruction. Who knows what else might have happened?

The Bay of Pigs could factor against him in the Republican camp and with so many liberal issues in the world today, don't think even Andrew Jackson and his older liberal colleagues will be watching him.

Follow up JFK with Dwight D. Eisenhower, Republican, 34th president (1953-1961). Kennedy's precursor and, listed with Ulysses S. Grant, arguably the greatest American general ever. Eisenhower led the D-Day invasion, the largest-scale modern military action, as Supreme Allied Commander.

As president, Ike was the first Republican since Herbert Hoover's forgettable term that ended in 1933. But Eisenhower invented a whole new wing of Republicanism. "We'll be conservative when it comes to taxes, and liberal when it comes to human beings," he said.

That ought to go over well with everyone. We need some war heroes, right? And that being said, Ike should get on perfectly with Democrat Andrew Jackson, the seventh president (1829-1837).

The first truly Democratic president, "Old Hickory" was a hell-raiser, and we all know that a few of those aren't bad. He fought with his cabinet members perpetually, and his tenure gave rise to the "Spoils System," controversial even in his day.

He'll keep everyone honest. Can you hear it now? Jackson exploding into a meeting with a bottle of whiskey in his hand and 50 angry

senators, who he helped get elected, right behind him.

So let's bring in a sobering influence: James Madison, Democratic-Republican, our fourth president (1809-1817).

Madison was known as the "Father of the Constitution" and, indeed, was a major contributor and thoughtful generator behind many of the document's philosophies and ideals.

He could be the silent guy in the middle who brings everyone together. Just look at him in all his pictures. The white wig, the starched shirt. He could probably use some style tips from Kennedy.

Speaking of that, we have to put Richard M. Nixon on there — Republican, 37th president (1969-1974).

What kind of tribunal is this without him? Picture a raging Nixon-Jackson-Kennedy debate where Dick is just sweating his last drop between both ends of the Democratic Party. Plus, he's reunited with quite possibly the only man not to make his famed "enemies list" in Eisenhower.

If nobody likes him, he's the scapegoat. Picture Jackson leaning over to whisper in Madison's ear, "We'll just blame that Californian." Interestingly enough, Nixon is a Quaker, our only president of that religious bent.

So here's the rest of the Southern contingency: George Washington, Federalist, first president (1789-1797).

It all has to start somewhere. Perhaps the most amazing thing about Washington was that he won a war for independence and was immediately rushed into a Constitutional Convention to preside over the making of a nation.

Washington did not want a kingship, but I think he'd go for this little oligarchy.

Heck, he'd be happy to be alive again and swinging. Picture G.W. and Jimmy Madison water-skiing out at Camp David or growing hemp, which they

both pushed during the Revolution.

Washington and Nixon can exchange their own whoppers and how they dealt with them.

Thomas Jefferson, Democratic-Republican, third president (1801-1809), joins them as the third Virginian.

Maybe a little weighty on the Old Dominion, but with the Massachusetts man and, as we'll see, a New Yorker in FDR and a journeyman like Lincoln, the balance is struck. Besides, didn't we quash that whole states' rights thing?

He'll be a bold and commanding presence on the board, but Jefferson is probably now best known for his hypocrisy in the tragedy of slavery in America. Talk about a rude awakening. Still, Jefferson had envisioned an America where liberty would one day be extended to all. He was just not man enough to step up to the rest of his Southern colleagues.

And though he may be the greatest American mind of all, what's the saying, genius is wrong 50 percent of the time?

Jefferson secured the Louisiana Purchase and pushed Manifest Destiny and the Westward Expansion, saying that he hoped to see America from sea to shining sea by the middle of the 20th century.

We all make mistakes, now Tom can see just how big his were. It would be interesting to see how he deals

with spin control.

Now comes the real leadership, though. We've got to have some direction. Who leads the leaders? Some fine, upstanding, spotless sterling characters.

Enter Franklin D. Roosevelt, Democrat, 32nd president (1933-1945). Entering into a dual generalship with FDR is Abraham Lincoln, Republican, 16th president (1861-1865).

With a pair of consuls like these two, the council is complete.

Lincoln saved the nation.

Roosevelt saved the nation.

They understood the concept of togetherness and unity in government and should certainly lend that to the far-reaching opposites we have vicariously elected.

You've got to think that Lincoln was the true father of this country as we know it today. Roosevelt is the master economic leader in here.

In terms of power and money, the United States will have it made under this elite corps.

Forget the 2000 election. Think about the abstract. Besides, wouldn't a Cosmic Consulate of Chief Executives be more fun than just one guy in the Oval Office?



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