

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 433
(A-22)

Introduced by: Medical Student Section

Subject: Support for Democracy

Referred to: Reference Committee D

1 Whereas, Democracy is most commonly defined as a system of government wherein the people
2 exercise power either directly or indirectly through representatives who are periodically chosen
3 in free and fair elections¹⁻⁴; and
4

5 Whereas, A 2019 study published in *The Lancet* found that “when enforced by free and fair
6 elections, democracies are more likely than autocracies to lead to health gains for causes of
7 mortality (e.g., cardiovascular diseases and transport injuries) that have not been heavily
8 targeted by foreign aid and require health-care delivery”⁵; and
9

10 Whereas, Multiple studies have shown a clear positive correlation between electoral integrity in
11 democracies and improvements in indicators of population health, including infant mortality,
12 mortality from cardiovascular disease and other communicable diseases, and tuberculosis⁶⁻⁹;
13 and
14

15 Whereas, A recent study including data from 168 countries from 1960 through 2010 found a
16 positive association between democracy and life expectancy that remained even after
17 controlling for potential confounders like gross domestic product (GDP) per capita¹⁰; and
18

19 Whereas, An analysis of the shift to electronic voting in Brazil, which disproportionately enabled
20 the poor and less well-educated to participate in elections, showed the change led to increases
21 in health spending that increased utilization of prenatal care and decreased the number of
22 children being born at low weight, suggesting that increasing access to meaningful elections can
23 improve population health¹¹; and
24

25 Whereas, A 2018 analysis comparing different Indian states across core attributes of democracy
26 showed that having higher voter turnout and more political parties were both significantly
27 associated with reductions in infant mortality¹²; and
28

29 Whereas, One study showed that the presence of competitive elections in autocracies was
30 associated with better life expectancy and rates of infant mortality as compared to autocracies
31 without competitive elections¹³; and
32

33 Whereas, Studies have shown that democracies may enhance the beneficial effects of various
34 societal transformations, including trade liberalization and foreign aid, on population health¹⁴⁻¹⁷;
35 and
36

37 Whereas, Studies have shown that democracies may suppress the harmful effects of a variety
38 of negative economic indicators and disasters, including storms, floods, droughts, and other
39 environmental disruptions, extreme price volatility, and excessive mining and mineral extraction,
40 on overall population health¹⁸⁻²⁰; and

1 Whereas, An August 2021 analysis of 170 countries over the time period from 1990 to 2019
2 published in *Health Affairs* indicated that democratic quality and universal health coverage have
3 a statistically significant positive association, with free and fair elections identified as having the
4 strongest association with higher universal health coverage²¹; and
5

6 Whereas, A 2020 *BMJ* study of 17 countries found that decreases in democratic traits, including
7 free and fair elections, freedom of expression, freedom of civil and political association, between
8 2000 and 2010 were associated with lower life expectancy, reduced progress toward universal
9 health coverage, and increased out-of-pocket spending on healthcare²²; and
10

11 Whereas, The annual Freedom House reports, which rate the political and civil rights of
12 countries around the globe, have tracked a steady decline in multiple dimensions of democracy
13 in the United States from 2010 to 2020²³⁻²⁵; and
14

15 Whereas, From November 2020 to January 2021, multiple key government officials attempted
16 to subvert the results of the 2020 presidential election through a variety of mechanisms²⁶⁻³⁰; and
17

18 Whereas, During the counting of electoral votes on January 6-7, 2021, hundreds of
19 Representatives and Senators in Congress voted to reject electoral votes from key states in an
20 attempt which, if it had been successful, would have overturned the results of the 2020
21 presidential election³¹⁻³³; and
22

23 Whereas, Multiple state legislatures have since passed laws that provide unprecedented control
24 over state and local elections and could permit those legislatures to subvert election results³⁴⁻³⁷;
25 and
26

27 Whereas, These antidemocratic trends in the United States directly threaten the ability of
28 physicians and their patients to make their voices heard, thereby depriving them of a key
29 avenue to maximize their health and well-being; therefore be it
30

31 RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association unequivocally support the democratic
32 process, wherein representatives are regularly chosen through free and fair elections, as
33 essential for maximizing the health and well-being of all Americans (New HOD Policy); and be it
34 further
35

36 RESOLVED, That our AMA strongly oppose attempts to subvert the democratic process
37 (Directive to Take Action); and be it further
38

39 RESOLVED, That our AMA assert that every candidate for political office and every officeholder
40 in the public trust must support the democratic process and never take steps or support steps
41 by others to subvert it. (Directive to Take Action)

Fiscal Note: Not yet determined

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RELEVANT AMA POLICY

Political Action Committees and Contributions G-640.020

Our AMA: (1) Believes that better-informed and more active citizens will result in better legislators, better government, and better health care;

(2) Encourages AMA members to participate personally in the campaign of their choice and strongly supports physician/family leadership in the campaign process;

(3) Opposes legislative initiatives that improperly limit individual and collective participation in the democratic process;

(4) Supports AMPAC's policy to adhere to a no Rigid Litmus Test policy in its assessment and support of political candidates;

(5) Encourages AMPAC to continue to consider the legislative agenda of our AMA and the recommendations of state medical PACs in its decisions;

(6) Urges members of the House to reaffirm their commitment to the growth of AMPAC and the state medical PACs;

(7) Will continue to work through its constituent societies to achieve a 100 percent rate of contribution to AMPAC by members; and

(8) Calls upon all candidates for public office to refuse contributions from tobacco companies and their subsidiaries.

BOT Rep. II and Res. 119, I-83; Res. 175, A-88; Reaffirmed: Sunset Report, I-98; Sub. Res. 610, A-99; Res. 610, I-00; Consolidated: CLRPD Rep. 3, I-01; Modified: CC&B Rep. 2, A-11; Reaffirmed: Joint CCB/CLRPD Rep. 1, A-21

Endorsements for Public Office G-605.035

Our AMA requires that all of its endorsements of nominations of appointed officials for public office be considered and voted upon by our Board of Trustees prior to any public pronouncements of support.

Rep. of the Task Force on Recording and Reporting of Trustees' Votes, A-11; Reaffirmed: CCB/CLRPD Rep. 3, A-12