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## Video Script for "Democracy in America"

In case you missed my previous video on the Electoral College, I will summarize it for you briefly: The Electoral College refers to an unfair system in which a small group of people actually choose who becomes President of the United States. As a result, what looks like a national presidential election becomes widely perceived as an unfair, undemocratic system which can result in a person who did not get the most votes becoming President. This undemocratic outcome actually did occur in 40% of the US Presidential elections this century. That's correct: the *loser* of the popular vote - the person who had fewer votes - actually became president several times this century, because of the unfair system known as The Electoral College. It is an *undemocratic* system and should *not* exist in a country that calls itself a democracy.

But in addition, today I will give you three *more* ways you can tell that we are not living in a democracy: the first of these ways you can tell is that true *democracy* - that is, one person, one equally-powerful vote, is not *really* the structure of our government. Our Government consists of elected representatives. We have congresspeople, we have senators, and we have the President. These are the people who make the laws for our country. We choose them mainly through elections and they are supposed to do what we want, rather, they are supposed to represent us. But if you carefully examine the policies they actually enact, these representatives tend to represent a smaller group of people than the large group of people who actually voted for them. A recent study known as the Princeton Study found that the policies that our elected representatives enact actually are more in line with the policies that wealthy individuals want - not what the larger group of people want. The Princeton study examined 1800 different policy issues from 1981 to 2002 and found that the laws that are actually passed are favored by wealthy elites and only sometimes favored by the majority of the people. The implication is that wealthy, elite individuals influence government policy through massive campaign contributions, in order to get the outcomes they want. In fact, the only time the majority of the people got the laws that they wanted, was when those laws coincided with what the wealthy campaign contributors also wanted. Therefore,

because we live in a structure that is *not* democratic - that is, with elected representatives who make laws - it is more properly a *representative republic* and *not* a democracy. The current problem with this form of representative government is that it is open to corruption, which is a more polite way of saying crime. Corruption means that wealthy powerful individuals can pay lawmakers in the form of campaign contributions and that is how wealthy individuals get the government to do what they want. Need an example? Here is one that many people are familiar with: right now over 70% of ordinary Americans favor Medicare-for-All, or a single-payer healthcare system that covers everybody's healthcare in the country. Almost every other advanced nation has such a healthcare policy. However, even though 70% of ordinary Americans want this type of policy, they will likely not get it - as long as a small minority of people who pay politicians and contribute to their campaigns want something different. So this popular example reveals the first way that you can tell we do not live in a democracy: if 70% of people want something and they do not get it, that is not a democracy. It is in fact, the opposite of democracy.

The second way you can tell that we do not live in a democracy is related to the first: that is, we do *not* get to vote on individual issues or laws. This voting procedure is known as a national referendum. A recent example of a national referendum comes from Great Britain, where the majority of people of British people decided they wanted to leave the European Union. This was known as "Brexit" - or "Britain's Exit" from the European Union. Even though many powerful wealthy elites wanted Great Britain to stay within the EU, the majority of British citizens voted for their own interests. The outcome reveals one of the reasons why countries do *not* let people vote on individual issues such as Brexit: sometimes the masses of people have different ideas and will pass different laws that do not benefit the small number of people who would rather be in complete control of the country's government. So that is the second reason you can tell we do not live in a democracy: because citizens are not allowed to vote on individual policies in a national referendum. Again, that is not the structure of our government. We elect representatives who decide what is best for us.

The third and most important way that you can tell we do not live in a democracy is something you may not suspect, and that is this: Most Americans are workers - that is they work for a living, and they work for businesses and corporations. Workers spend most of their waking hours working or preparing to go to work. However, most of the rules and regulations that workers must follow while at work are *not* decided by them: that is, they have no

democratic choice in how to live their lives at work. For example, imagine that the small number of people who make the rules for a business decide that if you're late 3 times to work, you are fired. That means that you will be fired if you are late 3 times to work - even if you rely on public transportation, or there is traffic, or your child is sick. The workers have no way to vote on rules like this - even if these rules are counter-productive and harmful. In addition, there is no democratic vote when it comes to vacation time, salaries, working hours, working conditions, or any other relevant aspects which greatly affect your quality of life as a worker. In our system, there is no democracy at work, where the rules that govern rights, responsibilities, behaviors, and even speech are controlled by a small group of people, who are often distant from the struggles of everyday workers. Therefore, when Americans spend most of their waking life at work, and there is no democracy at work, then you cannot fairly say that we Americans live in a democracy.