Reading Number 57
from Direct Democracy
by Thomas Cronin

p. 393, ¶ 1– “For about a hundred years Americans have been saying that voting occasionally for public officials is not enough.”

p. 393, ¶ 2– “Although the framers of the Constitution deliberately designed a republic, or indirect democracy, the practice of direct democracy and the debate over its desirability are as old as English settlements in North America.”

p. 394, ¶ 1– “Populist democracy in America has produced conspicuous assets and conspicuous liabilities.”

Ibid., ¶ 2– “The initiative allows voters to propose a legislative measure (statutory initiative) or a constitutional amendment (constitutional initiative) by filing a petition bearing a required number of valid citizen signatures.”

Ibid., ¶ 3– “The referendum refers a proposed or existing law or statute to voters for their approval or rejection.”

Ibid., ¶ 4– “The recall allows voters to remove or discharge a public official from office by filing a petition bearing a specific number of valid signatures.”

p. 396, ¶ 2– “The initiative, referendum, and recall were born in an era of real grievances.”

p. 395, ¶ 5– “Skeptics… worry about tyranny by the majority and fear voters are seldom well enough informed to cast votes on complicated technical national laws.”

p. 398, ¶ 4– “The initiative, referendum, and recall have not undermined or weakened representative government.”

Ibid., ¶ 5– “The initiative, referendum, and recall have not been used as often as their advocates would have wished, in part because state legislatures have steadily improved.”

p. 400, ¶ 2– “Whatever the shortcomings of direct democracy, and there are several, they do not justify the elimination of the populist devices from those states permitting them. Moreover, any suggestion to repeal the initiative, referendum, and recall would be defeated by voters.”