Democracy, broken down to its true value is a type of government or the rule of people. In the sense of its duty as that, it is no different than authoritarian, aristocratic, socialism, or even communism. All of the prior, including democracy are all words political theorists have come up with to define types or forms of rule and how the people or state will be governed. Or is it? Is democracy more than:

1. Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives.
2. The common people, considered as the primary source of political power.
3. Majority rule.
4. The principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community. (Dictionary.com)

Democracy to Americans has always meant more than just a form of government. Democracy has meant purity, goodness, and righteous and not simply for the rule of people. As Rebecca Bratten writes,

Democracy is not simply "the most practical structure for a particular time and place," but the only intrinsically good form of government

(http://www.theuniversityconcourse.com/1,7,5-7-1996/cc/Fox.htm).

This can be seen in our history when our forefathers declared America independence from the evils of British monarchical rule, therefore, the new form of government in this new land, democracy, must equate to good.

Today, the U.S. government has taken the word democracy and continued to use it as meaning of the word good. As Foreign Policy magazine writes

democratic transformation of the Middle East emerged as a central objective of U.S. foreign policy during the Bush administration

Specifically, the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is to build a democracy in Iraq and, hopefully after democracy is established where one of the worst dictatorships have been, the broader Middle East people will revolt against the monarchies or dictatorships that rule them and build their own democracies. These newly built democracies would promote peace and tranquility not only in that region, but across the global and especially here at home. The assumption of the U.S. government must be if democracy is the answer to the Middle East’s governments than the prior governments were the problem.

However, it is dangerous to make any such government a fundamentally good because that puts any other government set as fundamentally bad. The problem with this assumption of democracy and the attributes (like freedom) being best for a society is bad because the most political theorists that U.S. policy makers have studied are either Greek or Christian religious based. These policy makers then are making the decision to push democracy and attributes of it that may have worked in the United States, however, will not work in those countries. The societal differences between our Christian based society and the countries (Islamic and tribal based) around the world where the U.S. officials are attempting to deliver democracy are in sharp contrast.

This push to spread democracy around the world is not a new theme or policy. During and after World War I, President Wilson was pushing democracy on the idea of morality. If that sounds familiar, it should, President Bush has been promoting democracy as the means and freedom as the ends. Bush believes democracy is needed in the Middle East… “freedom is not America’s gift to the world; it’s the Almighty’s gift to mankind.” The push for the spread of democracy as a spread of goodness may best be seen during the Cold War years. The U.S and the Soviet
Union after World War II were pitted against each other as the only two super powers on the world stage. On the global scene there was only so much influence, resources, and power. The U.S. and the Soviet Union seesawed back and forth to gain that influence, acquire those resources, and all the powers that entailed. To demonize the competition the Soviet Union in the eyes of the world, the United States spoke of the undemocratic ways of the Russian’s. Communism, the type of government of the Soviet Union was non-democratic, labeled as not good, and therefore evil. The United States set up successful democracies in the two World War II enemies, Japan and Germany. Through the years of the Cold War, the U.S. set up democracy where it could and where it could not, it tried to prevent the spread of Communism.

Why and what is great about democracy? In today’s United States democracy it does not seem that like pure democracy (where the power is bestowed in the people). The democracy that is idolized about in political speeches and read in school history books is not what is seen and practiced, at least on the federal level.

Let’s examine the definition at the beginning of this paper. The first sentence: *Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives.* The federal government is elected by the people, and therefore, is a democratic process. However, I would argue that only the rich are elected, which is not democratic. I argue this because if you take a look at the last two presidential elections and Bush II v. Gore and Bush II v. Kerry. Each of these men are from the elite schools of Harvard and Yale, not Delaware County Community College. The second sentence: *The common people, considered as the primary source of political power.* The idea of the common people as the primary source of political power is obviously a root in the tree of democracy.
Unfortunately, this is not the case in American society. The rich and upper class hold the power. These people own the corporations, companies, and have the money to control government officials by contributions to these officials’ campaigns. The results are these upper class citizens controlling the decisions, which officials make, and therefore controlling America. The third sentence: Majority rule. While the majority who votes may have their candidate elected, there still is not the majority of population, the middle class being elected into office. Lastly, the principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community. As a country with many different types of people separated by race, color, religious affiliation, sexual orientation and gender, the task of social equality is a challenging one. However, over the last half of a century, Americans, and our government have taken more steps to treat each other equally.

If democracy as explained above is not working on the Federal level, what about the state, and more importantly, for the sake of this paper, what about the local level? Are the upper class citizens in control of the local governments? Do these local politicians care and appreciate the concerns of their citizens? And do the common citizens get involved politically?

The area that will be examined for its degrees of democracy will be a town, which its name is familiar to most Americans, Springfield. According to Citydata.com, there are twenty-eight Springfield’s in America and fictionally Springfield is home to America’s favorite dysfunctional cartoon family, The Simpson’s.

History of Springfield
Springfield Township, Delaware County (pop. 24,160) located 12 miles southwest of Philadelphia traces its governmental beginning to the year 1686, when the early settlers from Europe secured land grants from William Penn. Since 1924, the Township of Springfield has been governed under the provisions of the First Class Township Code. Today, the Board of Commissioners, comprised of seven elected officials representing seven wards of the Township, prescribes the power and authority of our governing body.

The Township of Springfield is a hub of commerce that provides residence for 24,160 people who enjoy the many municipal amenities. Springfield Township has one of the finest public and private school systems, churches of various denominations, an excellent public library, a 147 acre municipal golf course, which include a swimming pool and a (soon to be constructed) new clubhouse, indoor ice skating rink, and an extensive park system of 194.4 acres in 22 locations, which offer playing fields that provide athletic and recreational relaxation which are utilized by various athletic organizations and residents (Springfielddelco.org).

Demographics of Springfield

Races in Springfield:

- White Non-Hispanic (96.2%)
- Black (0.7%)
- Hispanic (0.6%)
- Asian Indian (0.6%)
- Two or more races (0.5%)

Ancestries: Irish (38.0%), Italian (27.1%), German (17.9%), English (11.3%), Polish (5.7%), Scotch-Irish (2.5%).
For population 25 years and over in Springfield

- High school or higher: 92.5%
- Bachelor’s degree or higher: 36.4%
- Graduate or professional degree: 12.0%
- Unemployed: 2.0%
- Mean travel time to work: 27.1 minutes

Springfield compared to Pennsylvania state average:

- Median household income above state average.
- Median house value above state average.
- Unemployed percentage significantly below state average.
- Black race population percentage significantly below state average.
- Hispanic race population percentage significantly below state average.
- Median age above state average.
- Renting percentage significantly below state average.
- Length of stay since moving in significantly above state average.
- Number of rooms per house above state average.
- House age above state average.
- Percentage of population with a bachelor’s degree or higher above state average.


Healthy Signs of Democracy in Springfield

Springfield governing council known as the Board of Commissioners (BoC) has seven members: Thomas V. Mahoney, Thomas J. McGarrigle, Kitty Jurciukonis, Bob McAndrews, Dr. Lee J. Janiczek, James J. Devenney, and Anthony J. Grosso. “The best form of government is in which sovereignty or supreme controlling power is in the aggregate of the community (Conte-Mill 44).” Each of these Board members lives in
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Springfield, therefore, as Thomas Paine (16) notes “as public concern increases, and the distance of the members may be separated…will render it too inconvenient” will not be an issue, due to the members closeness to the community. Besides the BoC, there are a number of committees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committees:</th>
<th>Mahoney, Jurciukonis, McGarrigle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration/Finance</td>
<td>Devenney, Janiczek, McAndrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building &amp; Grounds</td>
<td>McGarrigle, Devenney, Janiczek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Reg./Zoning</td>
<td>Grosso, Devenney, Jurciukonis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable/Communications</td>
<td>Janiczek, McGarrigle, Grosso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>McAndrews, Grosso, Janiczek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Janiczek, Jurciukonis, Grosso</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>McGarrigle, Devenney, Jurciukonis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Jurciukonis, McAndrews, McGarrigle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>Mahoney, McAndrews, McGarrigle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works</td>
<td>Grosso, Janiczek, McAndrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Club Complex:</td>
<td>MAHONEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CLUBHOUSE</td>
<td>• MCGARRIGLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• GOLF COURSE</td>
<td>• MCANDREWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• POOL/ICE RINK</td>
<td>• DEVENNEY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Springfielddelco.org)

Members from the BoC head all these committees. These member heads meet with citizens to address the concerns of each respected committee.
Also, the BoC has monthly town hall meetings; therefore, citizens can address the council with general or specific concerns and questions regarding the town or attend merely to be informed about events and business in Springfield.

At the last BoC meeting, a citizen living a block away from Springfield High School was complaining about not having a place to park due to students parking in front of his house. The man went as far as to video record students parking there. As a solution, he recommended that he, personally, set up a group to ticket on the street for people who park for a long period of time. The council addressed the issue by replying that they would look into the issue and contact him with an answer and possible solution. The man thanked the council for allowing him to voice his concern. “Complaints are everywhere heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens (Conte-Madison 22),” however, it is a visual sign of democracy.

The BoC does not just listen to complaints, at the most recent meeting, the board recognized the heroic effort of two residents and the fire department for saving the lives of an old lady whose house was on fire. At this recognition event, twenty plus fire fighters were present, a number of cops, and the two residences. These two residents received a plaque for their bravery, which showed the community appreciation for their actions. This recognition of their good work gave these two residents and the fire fighters a sense of personal pride and pride in Springfield. This pride resulted in an action for good, “mankind always acts in order to obtain which they think is good (Conte-Aristotle 55)” for the community.
Springfielder’s, while not all saving other citizens from fires, do get actively involved in the community. Some of these groups consist of the Knights of Columbus, League of Women Votes, Mother’s and more, Lions Club, GFWC Women’s Club, GFWC Junior Women’s Club, and American Association of University Women. Some of these groups volunteer time and donate money to better the community while others gather together to help solve social issues in our town and across the country.

Religion in Springfield also plays an important role in shaping social issues, bringing unity to our town, and allowing people to get involved civically. Springfield is home to ten different denominations: Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Friends, Non-denomination, Episcopalian, Baha’i faith, Assemblies of God, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. Many of these churches have programs to help serve the community. The Roman Catholic parish, St. Kevin’s has a number of committees set up to serve the community: St. Kevin Child Care Center, Social Concerns Committees, and the Parish Health Ministry. “Religion is the cause of the greatness of the State (Conte-Machiavelli 65).” Machiavelli even goes farther to say, “how much religion helped in disciplining…uniting the people…in keeping men good (Conte 65).”

“Education which is exceptional favored by nature (Conte-Aristotle 60).”

Springfield’s is home to public and Catholic schools.

**SPRINGFIELD HIGH SCHOOL**
111 W. Leamy Ave., Springfield, PA 19064

**E.T. RICHARDSON MIDDLE SCHOOL**
20 W. Woodland Ave., Springfield, PA 19064
Education, besides teaching a various number of subjects, teaching a number of different types of students (differences in economic, racial, social, mental, and sexual orientation), also teaches students to get involved in school affairs, such as after school group (sports and other extra curricular activities). Some of these groups consist of singing groups (which bring entertainment to seniors at retirement homes), football teams (that give a sense of pride in the hometown), and community service groups (which organize highway trash pick up, food drives, and money collection for charitable causes).

“People are brought together by common interest (Conte-Aristotle 57)”, one of the biggest common interest in Springfield is sports. The Catholic schools offer the CYO program, which stands for Catholic Youth Organization. The CYO overlooks and provides programs like basketball and football, where students can participate. The S.A.A. or the Springfield Athletic Association provides more of the same. Sports like soccer, football, baseball, softball, and students can play lacrosse at ages anywhere from 5-15. These leagues of wrestling, football, and soccer bring citizens from all
backgrounds and all sections of town together. Moms, dads, sisters, brothers, sons, and
daughter all get involved building a sense of family and unity in the community through
this participation in sports. “Participation brings people together in common projects
where they develop not only skills but more importantly construct a strong civic sense
(Conte 166).”

“In America, not only do municipal bodies exist, but they are kept alive and
supported, by town spirit” (Tocqueville 59). Town spirit in Springfield is demonstrated
by a series of events: going to athletic games vs. rival towns, attending plays and
theatrical shows, and conducting parades, which celebrate national holidays. Springfield
has very big turnouts for the St. Patrick’s Day and Fourth of July festivities in the center
of town. This town spirit also is shown in the form of pride in community when the
newspaper, The Springfield Press, prints articles about sports games, educational awards,
and military news.

_The Springfield Press_ informs citizens of town events and is used for citizens to
voice their concerns about town affairs. Recently in Springfield, there has been much
debate on whether or not Springfield High School would put lights on the football field.
Lights on the football field would allow for night games, however, residents near the high
school are concerned about the crowds that will be around after the game (mischief they
would cause) and game noise.

“A good community is one in which there is argument, even conflict, about the
meaning of shared values and goals (Conte-Bellah 83).” Besides the public debates at the
school board and Board of Commissioners meeting, _The Springfield Press_, has fairly
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informed the public about the current happenings involving the situation with the lights. However, when the citizens believe that *The Springfield Press* is favoring one side, these citizens place an article in the paper, which expresses their mal-content.

Springfield’s light situation demonstrates what type of democracy it is, a pluralist one. “For pluralists, free people with similar interests naturally collect together to protect and promote their interests (Conte 123).” The split in groups, those who want the lights on the football field and those who do not want the lights is an example of how individuals collectively come together to achieve their interests with like minded others.

In a pluralist theory interests are introduced as natural in the sense that all individuals are said to carry distinct interests…the good polity will be open to citizens who join with others like minded to pursue their shared interests (Conte 123).

Springfield’s collective group gathering towards shared interests can be seen in the light situation, however, it is seen through-out the community through the education, religious, athletic, and extra curricular associations, which Springfielders join.

However, while there are many signs of healthy democracy in Springfield, this pluralist society, it is not immune to a pathogen. If there is in an issue that affects a common citizen, then this citizen will most likely try to come together with others to make sure this issue positively affects him. However, if the issue does not directly affect him, then he will not involved and be disinterested.

At the BoC meeting where the fire fighters and those two heroic men were honored for their actions there were fifty people at the meeting (mainly fire fighters and police officers); the good sign of public participation and concern for the affairs of the
community ended when the award ceremony ended. The attendance of the meeting went from fifty to about four citizens when the Commissioners began the actual meeting. This lack of interest allows for certain interests groups to get what they want sometimes unopposed because citizens are not informed due their absences at these BoC meetings.

A pathogen of the pluralist system is that while the governing body concentrates on competing interest groups it often overlooks the individual citizen. Personally, while gathering my information for this paper, this pathogen affected me. After attending a BoC meeting I confronted the President and Vice President and asked them if I could interview them for this project. The President seemed enthusiastic and told the Vice President to set up the meeting. The Vice President then handed me his card and said this week was not good for him and if I called him in a couple days we could arrange a meeting. I waited five days and then called the Vice President and got his answer machine. I called every day for a week at many different times of the day and I even left messages. I even called the township building to find out what time his office hours were and apparently the Board members do not have offices at the building or office hours at all! Finally, after searching online I found that he had an email address, so I emailed him. This whole process lasted about three weeks and I still have not heard from him.

Pluralist democracy theorist, Robert Dahl “rejects the idea that a small elite group governs society (Conte 125).” At the beginning of this paper, I stated that I believe that America on the federal level is ruled and controlled by an elite group. For this paper, besides dissecting Springfield to see whether or not it is a democracy (and what kind), I wanted to see if the upper class citizens in control of the local governments? Do these
local politicians care and appreciate the concerns of their citizens? And do the common citizens get involved politically?

Research through sites like the Census bureau and City-Data.com provided me with information about the incomes of the families in Springfield (see page 17). I found that Springfield does not have an overly rich/poor gap. A majority of the population has a middle income. The situation where the Vice President did not return my calls and emails (See page18) bothered me and jaded my opinion of whether or not the Commissioners cared about an average citizen. However, I did not want to have a negative perception of every Commissioner because of the actions (lack of) one. To understand who these Commissioners were further I decided to read their bios on Springsfielddelco.org. I found that these board members are very involved in the community and not merely Commissioners. Some of the associations and committees they have been a part of include: Springfield High School Lacrosse Boosters, Springfield Lions Club, the Greater Springfield Business Association, Library Board, Public Safety, Planning, Park Board, Board of Directors-St. Francis of Assisi Parish CYO, Ice Rink, the Building Regulations/Zoning, and the Environmental and Police Pension Subcommittees of the Board. Their bios proved to me that these Commissioners did in fact truly care about the community because they are so actively involved in it.

My conclusion therefore is the Springfield has a pluralist democracy, which is fairly healthy. Citizens get involved in the community where their interests are and politicians tend to focus their efforts to accommodating interest groups. The average citizen can have their voice heard through the newspaper, attending BoC and school
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board meetings. The average citizen has town spirit and takes pride in serving on committee’s, and joining associations/groups with like-minded citizens. The only concern and bad attribute of this democracy is that ignorance of a politician overlooking the needs of a few or an individual.
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www.Springfielddelco.org