



Hello – A Perilous Mid-Term Election

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As our ship of state tosses in seas roiled by unprecedented dangers, voters are taking the helm.

Time for all hands on deck. This mid-term election is perilous. It could put people who falsely claim that the last election was stolen in charge of depriving citizens of their legitimate votes in the next one.

A perfect storm of greed and grievance is converging Nov. 8. These are the headwinds we're sailing into:

A Republican Party hijacked by extremists who do not accept defeat at the ballot box. Campaigns funded by oligarchs who don't care how dumb or undemocratic their candidates are if only they prioritize the interests of the rich over those of everyone else.

Anarchist technology billionaires, posing as libertarians, seeking to escape regulatory accountability. Seditious armed "militias" advocating violent overthrow of the federal government. White Christian nationalists pining for theocracy.

Threading throughout this tapestry of religious, economic and political grievance is an incendiary infatuation with anti-democratic authoritarianism.

A sleeper threat to our Constitution is meanwhile also afoot, peddled by far-right Republicans such as Steve Bannon, Donald Trump's former campaign chairman and adviser. They're moving closer to convening a constitutional convention that they hope re-writes our Constitution to gut the federal government's regulatory authority and entrenches minority rule.

"We need to say it constitutionally: 'No, the federal government cannot be involved in education or health care or energy or the environment,'" claims Mark Meckler, a Tea Party founder who heads Convention of States Action (COSA).

Yes, the federal government can and must be involved — if we mean to remain a functional nation.

Notably, the longtime Federalist Society leader who succeeded in seating a conservative majority on the Supreme Court, Leonard Leo, has jumped aboard this looming train wreck.

Article 5 of the Constitution provides two ways to change it: by amendment or a never-tried constitutional convention— if requested by 34 state legislatures. Republicans control 30 legislatures; 19 have agreed to seek a convention vote. Four states have voted yes. Our legislature hasn't acted.

Greatest threat

The Republican Party has “morphed into the greatest threat to the Republic since the Confederacy,” the New York Times recently opined.

The party “is infected from coast to coast with proudly ignorant conspiracy mongers, election deniers and gun-toting maniacs,” the Times said, and it “has become a cult that refuses to accept electoral defeat.”

“Cult”? Alarming language from editorialists at the traditionally dispassionate “Grey Lady” of newspapering.

Here's why:

Of the 550 Republican candidates for office in 50 states, 370 have cast varying degrees of doubt on the legitimacy of the 2020 election, and 240 of them are still doing so, a Times investigation found. Among them is Washington's 3rd District Congressional candidate, Joe Kent, endorsed by Trump.

Of the Republican candidates for secretary of state — who must ensure election integrity — more than half have expressed doubt that Joe Biden won the presidency. Should they win, the integrity of the 2024 election becomes fraught.

If a secretary of state cites possible fraud and refuses to count certain ballots, the door opens to sending a replacement slate of electors to Congress.

Let's not go there again, people.

What fuels these harebrained attacks on our federal government? The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United vs. Federal Elections Commission*.

In a crackpot opinion unworthy of the court, it conferred rights of personhood — specifically free speech — on corporations (“money is speech”), opening the floodgates to enormous, often untraceable amounts of corporate “dark money” for campaigns.

And, predictably enough, since the Citizens United 5-4 ruling in 2010, just 12 super-wealthy individuals have paid one dollar out of every 13 dollars spent in federal elections, according to the Brennan Center for Elections and Government.

This is unequivocal evidence that unequal access to political power is now baked into what we bill as a representative democracy. Unlimited donations sway policy away from the will of the majority to the narrow interest of donors, reminds Brennan Center's Chisun Lee.

Attack on fundamentals

Overtaking Citizens United should be the laser focus goal of anyone who cares about survival of our democracy because something new, and even more ominous, is happening.

Mega-donors and corporations "are supporting campaigns that attack the fundamentals of democracy itself," says Lee.

After the attack on the Capitol, corporations gave \$22 million to members of Congress who voted not to certify Biden's election. Among these were Boeing, Home Depot and Bitcoin.

Why?

"When the only elected officials who will carry your political water are proto-fascists, what is one to do?" lamented Jerry Talco, formerly of the libertarian Cato Institute.

Maybe stop donating before they become full-blown fascists?

Instead, these corporations are doing what German industrialists did in the 1930s: playing ball with Hitler. This ... um ... ended in tears.

Charles Koch, chairman of Koch Industries and a founder of Cato, also bankrolls the American Legislative Exchange Council. It writes business-friendly legislation for state lawmakers to pass. This undermines the public interest.

Because they can't afford to buy their own lawmakers, daily life has become much tougher for a critical mass of ordinary Americans than it is for citizens of other democratic nations. Surprise! Systemic political inequality triggers resentment.

But if Americans can be so blinded-sided by grievance and manipulative lies that they cannot spot a sociopath on the presidential ballot, how capable, really, are We the People of governing ourselves?

Hello?