

# THE NEWS VIRGINIAN

## What does Donald Trump respect?

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When we Americans choose a president, we need to consider more than their political inclinations. We must consider also the moral spirit in which they will use the great power they've been given.

In particular, will he or she be restrained — by respect for others and for the political system and culture in which they are working — from abusing that power?

“Respect” is a key concept here — defined as “a feeling of admiration or deference.” Such respect can be directed toward a person, group, ideal, etc.

In that context, we should ask: What does Donald Trump respect?

Does Trump show respect for other people?

He certainly did not show respect to his opponents — like “Little Marco,” and “Lyin’ Ted,” and Jeb with his “low energy.”

As Megyn Kelly’s famous question at the Fox News Republican debate showed, Trump has not been respectful of women.

And Trump has consistently shown disrespect for anyone who has said anything critical about him, whether it be Paul Ryan or the Gold Star father.

Toward his major allies, Trump has been benign, but not respectful, as when he’s treated Chris Christie and VP candidate Mike Pence with casual — almost humiliating — disregard.

While it’s true that Trump has spoken respectfully of Russian President Putin, that has been a way of putting down his own political adversaries: e.g. saying Putin is strong as a way of saying Obama is weak.

A poll conducted by the AP finds that 60% of registered voters in the U.S. believe that Trump “does not respect ordinary Americans.”

Has Trump shown respect for the norms and laws by which Americans encourage and require right behavior?

When Trump derided “Little Marco” and “Lyin’ Ted,” it was shocking because we had not — until then — seen anyone on so prominent a political stage violate a norm that says insulting people is unacceptable. Trump has made disrespect for that norm a cornerstone of his political strategy.

For more than 40 years, there has been a norm that presidential candidates will release their tax returns to the public. Never before Trump has it been so important to get a clear picture of a candidate’s financial dealings, but Trump is the first candidate to refuse to respect that norm.

Hundreds of workers and small contractors have complained that Trump has stiffed them on work he contracted with them to perform. Not only is honoring one’s contractual obligations a norm, but it is a legal requirement. It is one, however, that evidently Trump does not respect.

There are laws concerning how charitable monies may and may not be used, and we now know that Trump has not respected these laws — using charitable funds donated by others to settle his own legal battles, and to buy portraits of himself.

Perhaps most remarkable has been Trump’s consistent disrespect of truthfulness. The L.A. Times has said, “Never in modern presidential politics has a major candidate made false statements as routinely as Trump has.” And the Pulitzer-prize-winning fact-checking organization, Politifact, has found eight times as many “pants-on-fire” level falsehoods among

Trump’s statements as among those of his Democratic opponent.

(For just one example, on Trump’s signature issue of immigration: 1) Far from there being a wave of illegal immigration, the number of such unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. has decreased in the past eight years; and, 2) as the conservative Cato Institute reports, contrary to Trump’s alarmist assertions about immigrants as dangerous criminals, immigrants are less crime-prone than our native-born population.)

Perhaps most important for Americans to ponder before casting their votes is how much respect has Trump shown for the Constitution. Here the pattern of disrespect is no different: he has foretold actions he would take as president that would usurp the powers of Congress, curtail the ability of the press to criticize him, and impose unconstitutional forms of discrimination based on religion. The conservative National Review recently criticized Trump’s autocratic view of the presidency as “A Constitution of One.”

This pattern poses a problem bigger than liberal vs. conservative policies.

The attitude of respect — for people and for America’s norms and laws — seems alien to Mr. Trump’s character. What basis, then, is there for believing that -- in wielding the mighty powers of the presidency — he will be governed by anything but his own will and his own self-regard?