

The Delray Democrat

We Are Not Fighting to Save Our Democracy; We Are Struggling to Get it Back¹

Rob Resnick

To those who think we are fighting to maintain our democracy, think again. We lost it and are fighting to get it back. The 2016 election was not the beginning, but rather the signature moment. The country knew exactly who Trump was – he told and showed it repeatedly to anyone who paid the slightest attention. He was dangerously inexperienced in governance, woefully uninformed about policy and process, had a demonstrated anti-democracy agenda, and of course serious character flaws including a lifetime of lying, cheating, and assaultive conduct. None of that mattered to millions of his voters because he was elected to dismantle government and open the door to an era of extremism. Pandora’s box remains open.

Similarly, Democrats by any measure should have won control of the Senate that year which in hindsight could have been pivotal to preventing some of the Trump abuses that ensued. The same issues with the electorate that led to Trump winning allowed Republicans to keep the Senate. Over decades, there developed a type of American authoritarianism that lived in the soft underbelly of society. They were angry and frustrated at their perceived loss of status and opportunity. They believed that violence and revolution were needed to save “their country.” And of course, there was an abundance of racists and extremists in the mix, many in the form of militias. During the 2016 campaign, Trump referred to them as “Second Amendment people.” Hillary was right, they are deplorable.

MAGA was not just a campaign slogan that would typically disappear after the election and was not just a philosophy that might be replaced in future elections. This was the moment for which the extremists had planned quietly in the shadows for decades and it was their time to take control of the nation. Pundits tend to say that while Trump threatened and weakened our democratic institutions, they ultimately held and survived. Except that is not the case. The 2020 Election was not a repudiation of Trumpism and MAGA’s extremist, racist, anti-democracy agenda. President Biden won, ostensibly to restore the nation to a sense of normalcy and competence in governance. His election was in large part a result of Trump’s utter failure to even try and deal with the pandemic. But for that, Trump may very well have won and continued his battle to dismantle our democracy.

In place of Trump himself, we have disconcerting and overwhelming majorities of Congressional Republicans and numerous state officials brazenly continuing the anti-democracy movement, even a year after Trump lost reelection. The ongoing dishonesty campaign about the election being stolen is extremely dangerous. Republican officials well know that Trump lost and the election was secure, but that is not their goal. They seek to seize and keep power by creating chaos and confusion, discouraging people from standing up to them, and keeping their supporters energized,

¹ [The Delray Democrat](#), November 2021, p. 1.

albeit illegitimately. In 2020, Republicans won almost every swing or contested seat in the House of Representatives and only lost control of the Senate because VP Harris casts the tie-breaking vote. But for the fluke of two run-off elections in Georgia and Trump's post-election conduct that discouraged Republican voters, Republicans would have kept control.

Republicans intend to create so much mistrust in the election system that enough voters across the country will allow them to enact draconian measures to disenfranchise non-Republican voters and to allow them to actually steal future elections under the guise of protecting against nonexistent fraud. Measures passed in many states now allow elections officials to refuse to certify properly conducted elections because they do not like the result. There are many such new authorities that threaten the sanctity of elections and the ability of the people to vote for their elected representatives. Their supporters rally around fallacious claims of abuse by Democrats and false assertions of the Democratic agenda. The frenzy will allow the Trumpists to blatantly violate the law to keep power because their supporters believe they are saving the nation. But in fact, they are destroying it.

Republicans did extremely well in statewide offices, state legislatures, and even local elections across the nation. They control most redistricting efforts for the House and also for their own state legislative districts. They generated convoluted maps that ensure they can win easily while preventing meaningful challenges by Democrats or other candidates. They are in effect stealing power and usurping the electoral process. Republican strategy also included seeking control of local governments and school boards. This is not to effect good policy, but rather to support their efforts to undermine society and instill chaos even at that level. The violence and threats of violence you see in local meetings across the country are the direct result and the clear intent of the Republican plan to use the instability to garner support for, and minimize opposition to, their larger authoritarian plans. Would you have ever believed that what was once the party of Lincoln would preach violence and intimidation between Americans and force to seize power?

The January 6 insurrection is not over. The actual physical attack on the Capitol may have dissipated, but the larger effort persists. Republicans continue the reprehensible campaign of dishonesty about the election as well as their inexplicable support for the insurrectionists who not only violated the sacred halls, viciously attacked and injured dedicated law enforcement officers, but also attempted to harm and kill senior elected officials. This was all because they were desperate to hold on to power and to end American democracy as we know it. It is important to note that this was not a spontaneous event. It had been planned for months by multiple extremist groups and at least strongly encouraged by Trump and other Republican leaders such as Senators Cotton, Hawley, and Cruz, all of whom falsely claim to be Constitutionalsists, as well as House members Jordan, Gosar, Greene, and so many others. I do not consider political opponents to be traitors however much we disagree, but this bunch most certainly is.

Their goal was to use this moment to weaken our democracy, overturn the government, and make the Constitution irrelevant. Although they may not have entirely succeeded that day, they more than set the groundwork for a more serious such effort after upcoming elections. Ongoing Republican opposition to and undermining of the Select Committee investigating the insurrection can only be explained by two things – their support to undermine democracy and their involvement in the effort to overturn the election. In fact, we know that multiple extremist leaders/planners went on personal tours of the Capitol, led by these Republican officials and their staffs, which tours were instrumental to the planning so that the attackers knew where to go once they penetrated the

Capitol and where Congressional leaders would be taken for safety during the attack.

Republicans continuing to promote Trump and maintain his extreme agenda are also purging their own party. They completely vilified and weakened Liz Cheney, who has a solidly conservative voting record, because she dared to in support of the Constitution and democracy. These days those are cardinal sins for Republicans. All such “mainstream” Republicans have been or are being purged from the party. They are pressured not to seek reelection (e.g., Adam Kinzinger), primaried in favor of extremists wholly unqualified to serve in government at any level, and intimidated by threats of violence against themselves and their families. Many have had to employ private security because of Trump’s MAGA terrorists following these officials menacing them in public, at their offices, and in their homes. So there will be no true conservative or independent thinkers in the party, just a hoard of authoritarian extremists determined to undo our democracy.

Many Republican governors have chosen to place partisan politics over public safety, a new low even for them. While there may be room for some disagreement as to how to promote vaccines and implement pandemic safety measures, it is entirely disingenuous to per se oppose any and all efforts to protect the public and fight the pandemic. They push false narratives of freedom. They care more about diminishing President Biden and the successful Democratic pandemic response.

They care only to solidify their extremist base. They shamefully chose politics over their people despite their duty to those people, their states, and the nation. Consequently, we have increased vitriol and violence concerning efforts to defeat the pandemic, far more widespread avoidable illness, hospitalization, and death, and an ongoing pandemic threatening our schools, economy, and other areas of daily life. If you do not want a vaccine or to adhere to public safety measures, you have the right to stay home, not prevent society from beating this disease and preventing death.

Anti-democracy forces have gotten so powerful that they wielded a successful campaign to win control of local school boards. Whether they have the seats or whether they show up in mass to coerce officials, their aim is to undo our educational system. This is not about parental involvement or liberal teachers. It’s an attempt to indoctrinate children in their own extremist, authoritarian views. They want to prevent children from learning age-appropriate history, science, literature, etc., all to the end of controlling the development of their minds and making it easier to manipulate them and future generations. It is about intimidation, not education.

Everything must be a fight against mortal enemies. They must persist to the nth degree to win every issue, lest “enemies of the people” prevail. Ironically, by taking this approach of stealing power, undermining democracy, and vilifying those with whom they disagree, it is the extremists and their Republican allies/enablers who are the real enemy of the state and enemy of the people. Their un-American and anti-democracy conduct suggests nothing less and threatens our existence. They seek to prevent government from functioning by any means. They storm government buildings armed with assault weapons, attempt to kidnap Democratic leaders, assault elected officials and their families, and the perennial Republican obstructionism is so pervasive now as to prevent the US from paying our debts – debts the Republicans created. They want the government to fail so they can replace it with a new authoritarian regime. They want the American people too afraid to even attempt to save the country.

If this seems familiar, that is because it is. Loyalty purges, control of education, promoting violence, hate and division, and destabilizing governmental and democratic institutions is the roadmap to authoritarian regimes seizing and keeping power. The American people from all walks

of life, liberal to conservative, must band together to drive these extremists, racists, and authoritarians back into the stone age where they belong and preserve our freedom, our democratic institutions, and our values. Then we can go back to a free-spirited debate over policy. Until then, we all stand to lose and lose everything unless we unite against these perilous forces.