In Our Opinion

Don't forget to vote

Voting is one of the greatest privileges we enjoy in this country, so I hope you will remember to do so at the primary elections on Tuesday, July 30.

There are some fairly hotly contested elections at all levels of government in both major parties. I urge you to read up on the candidates, or to visit local candidates to learn their views. I encourage you to avoid conspiracies and stick with the facts, which is sometimes more work than it should be to figure out.

Linda Kor
Editor

If you are one of the many Americans who are unhappy with those representing them at the local, state or national level, remember that voting against them is the best way to register that dissatisfaction.

If you have found candidates with whom you share core philosophies and beliefs, give them your vote.

Those are the two best ways to change your government, no matter the level.

Rampell's View

Trump says he knows 'nothing' about his party's dystopian plans. Right.

By Catherine Rampell

Donald Trump's top advisers are organizing an authoritarian "revolution," and they are recruiting a 20,000-strong "army" of loyalists to carry it out. Yet Trump himself claims to know nothing about the project.

Don't fall for it.

Over the past couple years, the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank has been running a presidential transition project called "Project 2025." It includes a 900-page "policy bible" - far more comprehensive than the 16-page convention platform recently released by the Republican National Committee. The Heritage document's 30 chapters provide a detailed game plan for how the next Republican president should curb the First Amendment, roll back gay rights, infuse Christianity into more state functions, repeal climate and environmental protections, and limit reproductive care and health care more broadly. Oh, and it also disembowels much of the federal government and concentrates more power in the hands of the president.

Because rampant vacancies and poor training limited Trump's ability to implement his agenda last time, Project 2025 has also been recruiting and training thousands of loyal foot soldiers to execute these policies. As Paul Dans, Project 2025 director and former chief of staff of the Office of Personnel Management under Trump, put it: "Our goal is to assemble an army of aligned, vetted, trained, and prepared conservatives to go to work on Day One to deconstruct the Administrative State."

Trump has disavowed any involvement in the project. In a post on his social media platform Friday, he claimed he knows "nothing about Project 2025" and has "no idea who is behind it."

This is preposterous.

Besides Dans, hundreds of Trump appointees and aides are part of the initiative. Among them is Russell Vought, Trump's former head of the Office of Management and Budget, who is now policy director for the Republican National Committee. Also Stephen Miller, Trump's top immigration adviser. Plus John McEntee, one of Trump's closest aides, who recently told a conservative podcast that Project 2025 will "integrate a lot of our work" with the Trump campaign later this year. Meanwhile, Trump's super PAC is running ads highlighting Project 2025.

So why might Trump and his campaign wish to distance him from Heritage's project? Partly because of troubling comments made last week by the foundation's president, Kevin Roberts. In an appearance on the "War Room" podcast, founded by Trump adviser Stephen K. Bannon, Roberts declared that "we are in the process of the second American revolution, which will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be."

But the problem isn't merely this chilling threat. The greater liability is nearly everything Project 2025 says Trump would do as president, as it's chock-full of unpopular, sometimes even dystopian policies.

For instance, it says "Pornography should be outlawed" and "The people who produce and distribute it should be imprisoned," without defining "pornography." Given the ongoing library wars, which have seen books about gay penguins and how puberty works challenged as obscene, this seems like a dangerous, criminal campaign for the president to launch. Project 2025 would also infuse Judeo-Christian values throughout our government, such as its proposal for the state to formally recognize the Sabbath.

When it comes to health care, the platform would slash Medicaid funding, end health department programs promoting "LGBTQ+ equity," and direct the Food and Drug Administration to reverse its approval of medication abortion drugs. On climate and energy, it would cut federal funding for research and investment in renewables and block expansion of the electrical grid for wind and solar power.

Among its unpopular immigration proposals, the blueprint would effectively terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which provides work permits and protection from deportation to undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children. It would also further restrict legal immigration. For example, it would dismantle the program that allows seasonal agricultural workers to come here on visas.

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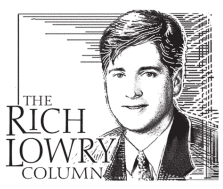
The coup against Joe Biden the Democratic Party is divide

By Rich Lowry

On the one side is the faction that wants to dump the presidential candidate chosen by more than 14 million Democratic primary voters.



On the other side is the faction that wants to keep the presidential candidate who almost certainly will not serve out his four-year term, leading to the ascension of an unelected president and unelected vice president.

What the entire party agrees on is that, either way, it is supposedly defending democracy.

There's no doubt that Joe Biden is the democratically selected presidential nominee of the Democratic Party, but also little doubt that his condition was hidden from the public and that, if he had to run in a free and fair nomination contest today, he would lose handily.

An increasingly feeble President Biden was a crisis waiting to happen, and now that the crisis is upon us, there's no easy way out.

A pejorative, but accurate, description of the campaign to get Biden to quit the race is that it is an attempted intra-party coup. The voters chose Biden knowing he was 81 years old, although the party apparatus did everything possible to deny them a choice between the incumbent and a plausible alternative, and everything possible to shut down the little-known member of the House who mounted a sacrificial challenge. (If there had been a prime-time primary debate between Biden and Rep. Dean Phillips, Democrats might not have been so shocked at Biden's poor performance against Donald Trump.)

Still, for donors, pundits and elected Democrats to attempt to undo this choice is frankly undemocratic. It looks even less democratic when it is factored in that a small handful of people -- Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer, James Clyburn and a couple of others -- are the ones who have the true power perhaps to force Biden from the race.

Leaving Biden in place isn't any better. If he's this fragile and addled in July 2024, there's no way he's going to serve in the most demanding job on the planet until January 2029. This means the electorate will be, in effect, voting in November to make Kamala Harris president of the United States sometime in the next term, without her being at the top of the ticket and withstanding all the scrutiny and bearing all the responsibility that comes with that.

Her accession will be constitutionally legitimate, since this is how the system works. But it will be doing Harris and the country no favors to have her take the presidency without winning the office directly herself.

All this was avoidable if Joe and Jill Biden had had the foresight and public-spiritedness to decide last year that he wasn't up for another presidential campaign and another term in office. That way, there could have been a fully open primary contest with a large, robust field. The winner would have had the legitimacy of having won the most votes in the primary and presumably have raised no serious question whether -- absent some terrible unforeseeable event -- he or she could serve out a full term.

The Bidens made that impossible and also created a situation where we don't know whether the sitting president is fully in charge and whether he has a serious medical condition, diagnosed or undiagnosed. Certainly, the White House has been doing everything possible to keep people from knowing about Joe Biden's reduced state, and until his catastrophic debate performance, almost all the insiders who had seen or heard about his alarming condition were happy to keep it to themselves.

"Democracy dies in darkness" is the Trump-era motto of The Washington Post. Well, the inner sanctum of the Democratic Party tried to keep the public in the dark about Joe Biden, and now either wants to dump him against the expressed will of its voters, or effectively run Kamala Harris for president without admitting to voters that that is what it's doing.

Defending democracy is hard work.

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Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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Contemplating Life

"It is a beautiful and blessed world we live in, and while life lasts, to lose the enjoyment of it is a sin."
--A.W. Chambers

It is a beautiful and blessed world we live in, and those who think it is not have either experienced more tragedy in their lives than the human body can handle or they have a distorted view of the world. In most cases it is the latter.

Allen W. Smith
Columnist

Some people magnify their everyday problems to the point that they conclude that life is barely worth living. This is a real shame, because the very gift of life in this world is, in and of itself, a wonderful blessing. This is not, however, to say that there are no negatives in life. Indeed, most of us experience major struggles throughout our lives.

In the words of M. Scott Peck, M.D., author of The Road Less Traveled, "Life is difficult, and life is complex." Anyone who disagrees with this view is in denial of the harsh facts of life. I am a firm believer in the value and power of positive thinking. A psychologist once told me, "Positive thinking is no more rational than negative thinking, but it sure makes life a lot more enjoyable." There is a big difference, though, between being a positive thinker and trying to maintain a constant and perpetual Pollyanna attitude toward life, no matter what happens. Those who attempt to see only the positive side of life are in danger of having their optimism turn into extreme pessimism when they are faced with an especially bad experience.

The key to enjoying life is to always focus on the big picture. Sure, we've all got problems, but most of us have a lot more blessings than problems. Those of us who are blessed with the gift of sight can have no doubt that the world is beautiful. Mother Nature provides us with some awesome sights no matter where we live. And those of us who are blessed with hearing are so enriched by the sounds of nature and by music. But, no matter how sunny our lives are, we will inevitably experience some storms along life's journey. During these storms, it is especially important to remember the sunny days from the past, and to look forward to additional sunshine farther along life's journey.

No matter how much heartache we experience as we travel through life, the world is still a beautiful place and we are fortunate to be alive. If we focus on the beautiful parts of life, it will be easier to cope with those aspects of life that are not so beautiful. Although some of us experience more storms than others as we travel the road of life, we will all inevitably experience our share of storms. During these storms, we should not lose focus on the beauty of this world.

Think about it.

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-- Psalm 33:12

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