

Biden must provide bold leadership from day one

As we turn to a new year, the spotlight shines on the new president and the new administration. Even as he assumes center stage in Washington, profound questions still remain about Joe Biden's plans.

His initial appointments have been solid, diverse, experienced and capable, drawn overwhelmingly from the established center of the party. He has recognized the nation faces crises of a scope similar to the Great Depression, calling for bold action. He has repeated his commitment to work across the aisle and seek bipartisan support, despite Republican legislators refusing even to recognize his victory. While recognizing the need for executive action, he has lectured civil rights leaders on the limits of his powers. As he prepares for what is likely to be a virtual inaugural, it is time for the president-elect to put his cards on the table.

What's needed now is an aspirational agenda — an agenda that reveals the scope of action needed to meet the challenges we face, and that provides hope and galvanizes support. There are many sources to draw on. As Bernie Sanders said, Biden ran on the most progressive platform of any Democratic nominee in memory. The Poor People's Campaign and the Congressional Progressive Caucus have put forth The People's Agenda, providing a roadmap for the administration. Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren have detailed 100-day plans for the administration.

Biden ran largely by offering a return to sanity in contrast to the Orange Menace in the White House. Now it is time to speak to Americans about the scope of the crises he inherits and the first steps he will take to fulfill the promise that "help is on the way."

COVID and the pandemic induced economic collapse pose the first test. The rescue package just passed by the Congress is too small to provide much more than a



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temporary life raft that is already leaking air. Biden should announce clearly that the vaccines will be provided free to all, and that distribution will be based on need — the most vulnerable first — not on privilege, connections or wealth.

The economic rescue package will need to be bolstered and extended, but more importantly, Biden should lay out his plan to make this economy work for working people once more. That should begin with a bold plan for rebuilding our decrepit infrastructure. This imperative, which should have bipartisan support, was Trump's greatest broken promise. A bold plan will create millions of jobs while addressing the climate crisis with a focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy. Biden should describe the program in bold strokes and summon the Congress to meet the challenge.

The promise of jobs in rebuilding America should be accompanied by a broad workers bill of rights to ensure that workers share in the profits and productivity that they help to produce.

Begin with a call for a \$15 minimum wage, a measure already passed by a supermajority of Florida voters, even as they voted to re-elect Donald Trump.

This list can go on, of course, but clarity of intent is more important than comprehensiveness.

Biden must make it clear that he has a mandate and plans to use it. That the crises we face demand bold action. And that he will drive the change. Americans are looking for bold leadership. Biden must provide that from day one.

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Collaboration will help ensure student success

As I come to the end of my first year at Clovis Community College, I find myself reflecting on all that has occurred over the past year.

As a country, we have faced a pandemic and resulting recession; as a state, we have seen economic challenges. As a community, we have come together #ClovisStrong to face these obstacles head-on.

The community of eastern New Mexico has pulled together in support of local businesses. Businesses have come together to support students and families learning to navigate online learning environments, and nonprofit organizations have pulled together to support families in need.

In this spirit, I look forward to 2021 and the possibilities it holds as I enter my second year as CCC president. We are committed to joining together with local community organizations to ensure we are doing our part to help the recovery effort. We are expanding our collaborations with our local higher education institutions to



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explore ways to serve students more effectively in this changing environment, allowing them to reach their educational and career goals.

As an institution, and as educators, the pandemic has taught us many lessons and provided opportunities for us to expand our services to students. We have overcome distance education challenges by increasing our Wi-Fi network capabilities, expanding our laptop check-out inventory, creating new online course offerings, providing significant faculty professional development in online teaching and learning, and initiating remote student services appointments through admissions, advising, financial aid, tutoring, and more.

Additionally, we have continued to offer our allied

health and occupational technology training programs while mitigating health risks to our students, faculty, and staff.

New Mexico's governor and Legislature have challenged our state's higher education institutions to continue to look beyond our traditional ways of operating as colleges and universities, to identify new ways to partner with each other.

Our community colleges have responded in a big way. In a breakthrough for higher education in New Mexico, five institutions — Clovis Community College, Northern New Mexico College, Santa Fe Community College, Central New Mexico Community College, and San Juan College - have signed a memorandum of understanding to implement and share a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. A shared ERP system provides a centralized database of student, financial, and personnel information that will allow the colleges to strategically share resources and information, such as accounting, student records, financial aid, etc., to

serve our students better.

Through this shared ERP system (when fully implemented), we will have the opportunity to share courses and academic programs across institutions, allowing students to have a more seamless experience as they transition between member institutions and opening new doors for careers across the state. The ERP will also allow colleges to share staff knowledge expertise for system maintenance and future development, resulting in future cost savings.

The shared ERP system is only the beginning. The partner institutions are already planning to expand this collaborative model into other systems at our institutions. We are committed to exploring new ways to come together — to find innovative and efficient solutions to ensuring student success and prosperity in New Mexico.

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Title IX should protect only biological women

Civil rights legislation always has its genesis in humanitarian principles: Protecting the weak, advocating for the voiceless, providing opportunities for the disenfranchised.

The Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts were remedies for institutional and generational racism that blocked many minorities, primarily African Americans, from obtaining equal status with their fellow citizens. The Americans with Disabilities Act, which marked its 30th year in 2020, mandated that this country treat those with mental or physical conditions that made their lives more difficult to navigate with respect, honor, and dignity.

Title IX is landmark legislation that was passed to ensure that women would have the same opportunities as their male counterparts in any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. While Title IX did not explicitly mention athletics, it's come to be known for its impact on women and their participation in collegiate sports.

Fast forward a few



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decades. Whereas it was clear that Title IX would apply to women, it has become increasingly difficult to define what, exactly, qualifies as a "woman" or more specifically, a female. That is because the trans rights movement has made biological certainty less important than "identification."

Now we have biological men identifying as women, even though they were born with male genitalia, and may in fact still have that genitalia. We have individuals who have all of the biological attributes of males, including their strength and innate athletic abilities, who present themselves as females.

Society is slowly (although not quickly enough for some) accommodating those who have a disconnect between their biological and psychological realities. And to the extent that we want to protect

people from being persecuted, or discriminated against because of the way they feel about themselves, that's a good thing.

But what is not a good thing, and what is not acceptable, and what must stop, is the consistent and inexcusable discrimination of biological females in order to make trans women feel better about themselves.

Over the past few years, there have been an increasing number of biological males who, after coming out as "female," have demanded inclusion on women's sports teams. This has put actual females at a huge disadvantage, because there is no question and no doubt that a biological male has certain innate advantages over females.

Tulsi Gabbard agrees with me. The Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii and erstwhile presidential candidate has bucked her own party and presented legislation that would prevent biological males from competing as females in women's athletics. Her bill would clarify Title IX to limit protections to those who were born as biological women, and not

extend to those who identify as such.

According to Gabbard, "Our legislation protects Title IX's original intent, which was based on the general biological distinction between men and women athletes based on sex. It is critical that the legacy of Title IX continues to ensure women and girls in sports have the opportunity to compete and excel on a level playing field."

Gabbard is absolutely correct. Trans women and men should be protected against a host of ills and crimes, but they should not be able to appropriate a bill designed to protect an equally vulnerable group for spurious purposes.

Victims come in all shapes and sizes, and protecting some, sadly, harms others. I'm glad that at least in this limited arena, a legislator actually figured that out.

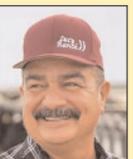
And now I understand why Tulsi Gabbard never made it through the primaries. She made too much sense.

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