

Newsletter 27 November 1, 2024 Where will we go from here?

Any newsletter that we get from now until election day undoubtedly will open making a plea to be sure to vote, so I'll do the same. But, if you're still reading my newsletters, I have to assume you don't need the reminder. On the other hand, let's all make it a point over the next few days to casually remind any contacts that we're not sure plan to vote or we have reason to think may be undecided. Be a little more than casual if they reply "nah, my vote never matters." Many of you I imagine are already knocking on doors.

Are you like most Americans thinking this is the most divisive election ever? Maybe, but let's not forget the Vietnam era or the Joseph McCarthy days or go back to the 1860 election of anti-slavery candidate Abraham Lincoln, and there are others that I'm sure were considered the most divisive at the time.

Now the key issue on which the outcome depends would seem to be the economy. While it may be too late for Kamala Harris to make significant campaign appeals, any of us who have already voted for her or plan to and have friends or other contacts who are undecided have a few last days to try to convince them to vote for her. But at this late date, we should focus on being absolutely honest with them. None of us want to hear any more about all the handouts that both candidates are promising in hopes of buying votes. We want to hear someone speaking more meaningfully and honestly. As I've said before, Kamala has or had a better chance of convincing some undecideds if she simply admitted some past shortcomings and said how she would overcome them and how Trump's policies would only exacerbate them.

Tell the undecideds what she and the Biden administration are doing to build factories that will bring a wide variety of more and better paying jobs to counties across the nation. She will diligently focus on implementing these projects. Admittedly, however, it will take months and in some cases a couple of years or more before they're up and running and providing unparalleled new opportunities for them for high paying middle class jobs

Point out that Kamala fully realize that this doesn't help them pay their current bills that have been affected by worldwide inflation over the past few years---we have now solved the inflation problem and are back or close to normal, so their costs for groceries will not continue with excessive increases. But they will stay higher than pre-pandemic levels and are likely to remain so.

Unfortunately, much of this global problem is, and has been historically, out of the control of the administration. As we are all too aware, in a representative democracy like ours with a market economy, neither Kamala nor Donald Trump can just snap their fingers and make an executive order that will force lower prices.

But there are things that Kamala can and will do to address the high grocery costs. To help pay for these, she has been working on raising the minimum wage where applicable, e.g. workers in the large fast food companies, but perhaps not in small business who might have to close their doors if subjected to higher minimum wages. And, she will carry on with President Biden's support for unions.

The negotiated insulin and prescription drug price decreases are starting to kick in, and she's planning to do everything possible, short of price controls that would only have a negative effect.

While many of us may be in the fortunate position of not having to take advantage of these efforts, most of us realize that those less fortunate are relying on these efforts.

What is Trump telling us he'll do---nothing other than placing high tariffs on imports from China that, as history tells us, will only increase the prices that we pay for these goods as well as for the goods of the domestic competitors, thereby contributing to, rather than preventing, further inflation.

And perhaps even more significant to those of us having problems balancing our household budgets will be Kamala's tax reform efforts. She is going to increase the taxes on the highest earners but avoid increases for those households making less than \$400,000. On the other hand, Mr. Trump's plan for lower taxes will follow what he did when in power, the bulk of the reduction going to the big earners, piling on more national debt, with little or no help for the rest of you. And, while some of us may still not quite yet be as well off as we were under Trump, it's certainly not because of anything he did. He was fortunate enough to inherit the low inflation of his predecessor President Obama.

That's the message that we want to leave with our undecided friends or other contacts who don't need any more convincing about Trump's character shortcomings.

While the economy just discussed seems to be the most critical issue, the most divisive issues seem to be immigration, abortion, crime, and the end of democracy as we know it. Again, anything we say about these issues when trying to persuade the undecideds must be honest not just more vote buying, even if we have to admit any past unmet challenges during the Biden administration. We Americans can be very forgiving—but there is a limit to our gullibility.

And, of course, in our closing arguments, we can say “Don’t just take my word for it---some of Donald Trump’s closest confidants, for example General John Kelly Chief of Staff, Marine Corps General James Mattis Secretary of Defense, and General Mark Milley Head of the Joint Chiefs, all role models in patriotism who have spent their careers defending America, have specifically gone on record attesting to Mr. Trump’s unfitness for the presidency.

But, let’s consider for a moment how these major issues will affect each of us personally if our candidate loses. If we were financially better off in the past Trump administration, do we really have any reason to believe that re-electing Trump will lower our current grocery and gas bills?

How many of us see our personal situation being significantly affected over the next four years by looser or tighter borders. There is no way that Trump will be able to deport a majority of undocumented immigrants or even locate them. And many of the undocumented have been granted and are in line for an asylum hearing. Hopefully, under the new administration, we will pass the bi-partisan reform bill that Trump previously stymied but would be hard pressed not to support if he’s in the oval office again.

Regarding crime, most but not all of us are living in areas where violent crime is not up. Statistics show violent crime across the nation down since Biden’s inauguration and now at its lowest point in more than four decades according to both nationally recognized crime analyst Jeff Asher and the FBI---and immigrants per capita are apparently responsible for less crime than the rest of us.

As for Trump, while I believe he is a potential threat to democracy since he has praised Vladimir Putin, Victor Orban and other autocratic national leaders, and displays many of their

characteristics, he may temporarily damage our institutions but I don't see him capable of piercing the veil of the separation of powers that would enable him to accomplish his grab for the powers of Congress and SCOTUS. I don't think justices Kavanaugh, Gorsuch and Barret, while appointees of Trump and supporting his immunity, are his sycophants as many in Congress are.

Or do some of us think that Kamala is the real threat to democracy? Is she more outlandishly progressive than Joe Biden, or, for that matter, Lyndon Johnson or Franklin Roosevelt both of whom are lauded for their major social legislative accomplishments? Even if she were as or more progressive, that hardly makes her a Marxist or serious threat to our democracy. With all the backlash over the Biden administration's spending as the alleged cause of the recent inflation, do we really think that Congress, regardless of who controls it, would support all of the spending on which she is campaigning, or, for that matter, that she would actually pursue all of it once in office?

And, regardless of Trump's constant disparaging of the country, as Gerald Seib pointed out in his October 19-20 *Wall Street Journal* article "The Bright Spots in the Doom and Gloom of Our Politics", "Voter engagement is high, split-ticket voting is on the rise, and legal institutions are holding both parties accountable."

What I am leading up to is the fact that we should all step back, take a deep breath, and realize that, even if our candidate loses, it is not the end of the world, not the end of America, nor the end of what to most of us is a very comfortable life, the envy of others in the rest of the world, many of whom risk their lives and everything that they own to cross our borders and partake in our blessings.

I opened Chapter Nine "The Art of Compromise" in my book *Bachelors of Citizenship* with a quote from Edmond Burke "Every

human benefit, every virtue and every prudent act is founded on compromise.” And, if we gracefully, or at least not controversially, accept the loss of our candidate, set our party affiliation aside, and vow to compromise on the issues on which the candidates campaigned, we can turn defeat into opportunity---for example, express to your Senators and Representative your support for a bi-partisan immigration reform that speeds up the assimilation of productive immigrants getting them into the work force and on the way to citizenship, and deports the criminal element.

Regarding the economy, let’s step up and, hold the winner accountable, for providing, employment, food, and housing for those in need---being candid to all of us about what they can and can’t do controlling these costs..

And in closing, from my standpoint, if there is a bright spot in what’s going on, beyond the just mentioned opportunity, it is that unquestionably the answer to preventing this type of political disaster in the future is more voters better educated in the lessons in citizenship promoted by Step Forward America including a focus on current in addition to historical affairs,---more voters who could answer a question such as “what specifically did Donald Trump do that made your life better then than it is now?” or “what specifically did the Biden administration do or not do to make your life worse now than it was then?”

Now, casting aside all this “what can the country do for me to make my life better and win my vote” paraphrasing JFK, let’s address “what I can do for the country to make everyone’s life better.”

For comments, further information, or requests to unsubscribe, please contact tedhol@charter.net

Step Forward America

Ted Hollander