

## **A Letter to Republican Senators and Representatives Who Know Better**

This is not a letter to Republicans who believe that wildfires were caused by Jewish space lasers, or that White Nationalists are excellent candidates for military service, or who are tired of this separation of church and state junk. This is not a letter to Republicans who propagate the lie that Haitians immigrants are eating neighborhood cats or who blame elementary school shootings on transsexual leftist illegal aliens, or who believe that allowing gay marriage will open the door to people marrying their pets.

This is a letter to Republicans who know better. It is time to stand up.

You know that Donald Trump lost the election in 2020. That he continues to lie about it. And that he demands that his loyalists, under pain of retribution, lie about it. And that they do.

You know that on January 6, 2021, Donald Trump incited supporters to disrupt the electoral vote count, then watched spellbound, fingers unlifted, for hours as his supporters violently attacked the U.S. Capitol to prevent certification of the results of the presidential election.

You know that Donald Trump, characterizing the hideous attack on the Capitol as a “day of love,” pardoned each and every one of the January 6 insurrectionists, blithely including those who brutally assaulted the Capitol and D.C. police officers who protect you every day. And that he did this because those insurrectionists loved him more than they loved the truth or the law of the land.

You know that Donald Trump improperly took government documents, many of them containing classified information potentially critical to the nation’s security, upon leaving the White House and kept them, some casually strewn about at Mar a Lago, as personal trophies. Some of those documents were given the same level of security as the toilet paper in the bathroom of the club’s Lake Room.

Stand up.

You know that many of Donald Trump’s nominees for cabinet positions of grave responsibility and prodigious complexity are clowns, sycophants, power mongers, virulent right-wing zealots, and conspiracy theorists.

To run the world’s most powerful military, America and the world’s bulwark in a fearsome and unstable world full of terrorists, nuclear armed despots and rogue states, Donald Trump picked a bibulous propagandist from FOX news who fiercely lobbied the first term President to pre-empt military justice by pardoning accused army war criminals and who failed miserably at running two small non-profits. This man stridently instructs that the founders actually created a republic, not to make a learned political science point, but to emphasize his own derision of a democracy that thwarts his aspirations for a White Christian America.

To be the nation’s top health official Donald Trump picked a man who for decades has advanced scientifically grotesque vaccine conspiracy theories and has claimed that man-made chemicals in water turn children gay and transgender. In what for him engorges an ongoing delusory mashup of legitimate scientific matter with moronic and dangerous contentions, he asserted in a monologue on bioweapons that “there is an argument” that COVID-19 is “ethnically targeted,” thereby recklessly fomenting just such an evidence-free argument that the virus was developed as an ethnic bioweapon.

To lead the FBI, the premier domestic security and law enforcement agency in this nation, Donald Trump picked a man who believes the FBI itself helped trigger the attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. His qualifications for running the nation’s premier law enforcement agency include authoring a staggeringly

sycophantic “children’s book” that aggrandizes himself as a brilliant wizard who comes to the aid of King Donald, a sovereign hero endangered by Hillary Queenton. This trumpanegyric farce styles his fictional proxy of the FBI as “slug stables in a shadowy corner of the castle.” In his book “Government Gangsters” he includes a starter list of enemies that includes former FBI Directors James Comey, Andrew McCabe (acting) and Christopher Wray, along with Joe Biden, General Mark Milley, Bill Barr, Hillary Clinton, Merrick Garland, Cassidy Hutchinson, Liz Cheney, Adam Kinzinger and many others who dared to question the divine right of King Donald.

These, and many of Donald Trump’s other nominations, are not acts of leadership team building. These are acts of utter contempt. These are not people of quality, experience and responsibility. These are Donald Trump’s personal gangsters.

Stand Up.

You know that the Justice Department is not Donald Trump’s personal law firm.

You know that purging the FBI and the Justice Department of any employee who had any role in investigating Donald Trump’s corrupt and patently indictable actions, and firing Inspectors General who might examine the legality of any of his future conduct, are not actions intended to improve the quality of government. They are acts of personal revenge and preemptive cancellation of anyone who might dare to question his imperial actions.

You know that arbitrarily threatening, reclassifying, attacking their civil service protections, and firing civil servants on the naked premise that government employees are inherently superfluous and wasteful is not a rational campaign of streamlining bureaucracy. It is a campaign of theatrical vandalism.

Stand Up.

You know that unleashing a solipsistic rooster holding no properly deliberated appointive office nor any electoral legitimacy to declare USAID a criminal organization and undertake to crush it, endangers lives across the globe and immensely damages this nation’s international goodwill. Allowing this vainglorious, disdainful, and profane exterminator, an infamous scofflaw, to launch a punitive and chaotic war on the nation’s government, and to turn loose his own personal pack of ideologically rabid dogs, is not an exercise in government reform. It is a mercenary demolition derby.

Men who look upon themselves born to reign, and others to obey, soon grow insolent; selected from the rest of mankind their minds are early poisoned by importance; and the world they act in differs so materially from the world at large, that they have but little opportunity of knowing its true interests, and when they succeed to the government are frequently the most ignorant and unfit of any throughout the dominions.

Thomas Paine, Common Sense

Stand Up.

No matter how urgent it is to develop rigorous, workable and humane immigration policies, you know that demonizing desperate illegal immigrants as rapists and terrorists and as robbers of American benefits and jobs stokes the ugliest fires of fear and hatred, promotes cruel and overbroad enforcement policies, and constitutes the cheapest form of vile scapegoating instead of addressing macroscale structural problems.

You know that, while carefully designed import and export taxes can be a legitimate tool of international trade policy, launching indiscriminate and punitive tariffs and instigating irrational trade wars gravely threatens global economic stability, crucial international partnerships, and the economic well-being of almost every American.

You know that threats of American takeover of Greenland, Panama, and the New Gaza All Exclusive Trump Resort are the belligerent ravings of a power-intoxicated megalomaniac. One who trusts Vladimir Putin, gushes over Viktor Orban, is thrilled to be emulated by Javier Milei and says that Volodymyr Zelensky is a dictator who started the war with Russia. One who in a nationally televised oval office meeting, channeling his idol Vladimir, accused President Zelensky of being the party that threatens WWII and delivered to the embattled defender of his nation the protection racketeer's threat "you don't hold the cards." Not a word about international law, order and justice. Not a word about the threat, long hard fought by the United States, posed by Russia to Europe and the world under its despicable tyrant.

Stand Up.

You know that threatening, attacking, excluding, co-opting, suing, and eventually prosecuting the press for opposing the infallible king are attempts to silence, subjugate and destroy the most powerful guardian of justice and democracy.

You know that claims and attempted exercises of unlimited executive authority, such as revoking birthright citizenship, usurping legislative branch power by freezing federal spending, undertaking liquidation of or paralyzing through other means agencies chartered by the Congress, and increasingly explicit challenges to judicial authority, constitute a repudiation of the Constitution and a brazen bid for autocracy.

The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.

James Madison, The Federalist No. 47

Stand Up

You know that Donald Trump is an adjudicated sexual abuser (for an act unambiguously constituting rape in federal and many state jurisdictions) who has proudly bragged about his ability to get away with grabbing women in an obscenely humiliating way. He is a convicted felon. He is a rampant liar. Acting largely through corporate proxies, he is an inveterate fraudster. His words and actions are those of a lifelong racist and sexist. He is a profoundly ignorant bully whose only deeply held values appear to be self-aggrandizement and the acquisition of power and money, the last for which he is blatantly using the office of the presidency. His belligerent treatment of other nations, his relentless denigration of immigrants, and his acts of governmental arson do not arise from any rational policy considerations. He does all these things because they pump up his insatiable ego, they punish those who do not idolize and obey him, and because they make his MAGA mob laugh, honk, and cheer. He seems to enjoy destroying things, including USAID and NATO, because it demonstrates the size of his cudgel.

Stand Up.

But, you ask, why doesn't somebody else stop him? Let it be the Democrats. The courts. The CEOs. The press. The clergy. The Association of Flight Attendants. But at this moment they are not - or they cannot. Not without you. It is you, not them, who hold the majority in the House and the Senate. It is you, not

them, who are making his colossal abuse and destruction possible. It is you, not them, who are able to forge the alliances that are necessary to stand up to this cyclone of malfeasance.

You have the responsibility, the power, and the sacred obligation to uphold the Constitution, preserve the Republic, and serve the common good. This is your highest responsibility. Not obedience to The Boss. Not subservience to the Party, a party that has metastasized into an extreme right-wing parody of itself. Not acquiescence to the passions of the MAGA mob when the subject of their fealty is attacking the fabric of their nation in ways that you can see, and many of them so far cannot.

The aim of every political constitution is, or ought to be, first to obtain for rulers men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of the society, and in the next place, to take the most effectual precautions for keeping them virtuous whilst they continue to hold their public trust.

James Madison, The Federalist No. 57

There is a nearly obsolete doctrine in tort law called “last clear chance” in which someone with the opportunity to prevent harm, being the final actor able to avert it, has the obligation to do so. This Republic is facing a last clear chance. The final actor is you. Or it may be the Republic itself that will become obsolete.

Stand up.

But, you say, this is what my constituents voted for, and their will must be done.

Your constituents no doubt voted in the majority for this president. Some because they believe that mongrel races are invading the country and taking White people’s jobs, that White Christians are being persecuted, and that transsexuals are taking over our schools, our libraries, and our government. Some voted for the President because they are enraged at urban and coastal elites by whom they, with some merit, feel disrespected and marginalized. Some high-income constituents voted for Donald Trump because lower taxes for them is a personal benefit that supersedes all other goods, public or private. Some voted for Donald Trump because they believe Republicans are good for business, that Democrats are bad for business, and that the business of America is business.

Did these votes make Donald Trump the king? Did their votes overturn the Constitution? Did their votes warrant corruption and perversion of the machinery of justice? If so, then you are right to bow before the president and his minions.

Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

Edmund Burke

Many of your constituents who voted for the president are angry because eggs and housing are brutally expensive, middle-class jobs are scarce, and real wages have risen very little over the last 40 years. These things are all true. And you can and should support the administration when they promote rational policies that actually address these critical issues.

But, you say, I can only be a constructive force operating from within.

What good does it do if I lose my seat, you ask? This, coupled with statesmanlike endeavor, is a credible argument when democracy, law, and civility are robust, and the branches of government are operating

within legal and normative bounds. This is an appeaser's argument when these conditions do not obtain. Then it is a rationalization that aids and abets the tyrant and lubricates the downward slide into fascism.

But, you say, I am a Republican, and my party has spoken.

Is the party line one that supports truth, justice, international order, human rights and the Constitution? Is it one that values pluralism, good faith dialogue and honors differences of opinion? Is it one that values rational inquiry, evidence, and due process? When the party line becomes tyrannical and corrupt, what become abject supporters of the party line? Absolute loyalty to the godlike leader and his party is the signal hallmark of cults, theocracies, and totalitarian regimes.

Stand up.

Of course you are afraid. And for good reasons.

Because if you stand up, you will incur the volcanic wrath of the radicals and be denigrated as a RINO by Donald Trump. You will receive oceans of hate mail from the raging mob.

If you stand up, you will be vilified as a heretic, a compromiser, and a traitor.

If you stand up, and dare to join in any measure with those infidel Democrats who are promoting atheism, communism and involuntary transgender surgery in middle schools, you will be primaried and scheduled for the great purification by the fanatics. But know this, Republicans Who Know Better: The True Believers already know you are not one of them. Fanatics always distrust and despise their servile collaborators whom they know do not burn with righteous zeal. Their power grows apace, and they will get around to you soon enough. Remember Churchill's warning: "Each one hopes that if he feeds the crocodile enough, the crocodile will eat him last."

If you stand up, it may very well cost you your political career. A firestorm of demagoguery feeding on fear, anger and ignorance and enabled by cringing submission have brought us to this perilous juncture. You must decide if your political career is more important than preserving a constitutional democracy. So far, your priorities seem clear.

If you stand up, you may have reason to fear for your own personal safety and even that of your family. The fact that this is so should tell you exactly what you need to know about this administration and the perilous state of the Republic. Do you believe appeasement makes you and your children and your grandchildren safer? History provides the answer.

Are you hoping this will all simply bottom out before the Republic is in tatters?

Do you think that Donald Trump is going to finally comprehend the damage done by this brutish assault on the law, on science, on our institutions, on our alliances, and on America's capacity to be an agent for peace and justice in the world? That he will realize that Putin and his ilk are corrupt kleptocrats and vicious dictators with no regard for international law and human rights - and that this is a bad thing? That he will suddenly comprehend that the experiences, beliefs and very lives of anyone other than himself actually have meaning ("*L'État, c'est moi*")? Why should he? Like any feral two-year-old, his sole interest is in getting his own way.

Donald Trump exhibits no empathy, no core ethical philosophy, no sense of responsibility to the common good, no knowledge of or interest in history, philosophy or science, and no capacity for growth. He now enjoys essentially absolute immunity from any personal consequences for his actions, many thanks to the reactionary and deferential Supreme Court. He has survived two impeachments and is in a gleeful

position to punish the impeachers. He owns the Republican Party and unless soon opposed will keep it. He has a non-zero chance of being president for life, whether because of a second term abbreviated by mortality or by contrivance of a third term by his loyal apparatchiks. His devout lackeys, unburdened by discernment or doubt, scurry to obey his every command like cockroaches swarming a broken pack of Oreos. He is the Commander in Chief of the most powerful military on earth, whose men and women of service he basically despises and ridicules, and whose leadership he has just begun to purge. These kinds of people never stop. Never.

The only way bullies and mobsters are stopped is when decent people get off their knees and fight together for what is right. Most of the people in both houses of Congress know that Donald Trump is a morally crippled, striving autocrat madly driving a devastating bulldozer across the American and global landscape. Joining them, regardless of party, to maintain the foundations of constitutional democracy does not require you to give up your fundamental ideals nor to suddenly agree with them on other legitimate philosophical and political differences. It requires you to form a courageous patriotic coalition for the defense of the Constitution, the people and the commonwealth. This is the true and proper meaning of America First. It is up to you to form a coalition of the lawful, the reasonable and the decent.

Stand Up.

While standing up is perilous, it does not require the courage of Alexei Navalny. This is not yet Russia where the corrupt and all powerful despot can irresistibly order you poisoned, prosecuted in kangaroo courts, thrown in the gulag, and murdered. Not yet.

Stand up.

You stand on a fulcrum of American history. Who do you want to be?

Do you want to share a place in history with a certain politician who, despite having been ritually humiliated over and over again by Donald Trump, ever returns to bow and scrape rather than be banned from the malignant nimbus of power? A man, once politically reasonable, whose political buttocks now take the shape of the nearest chair that offers maximum derivative power and status. History will remember.

Do you want to share a place in history with a certain politician who, while declaring Donald Trump responsible for the January 6 attack on the Capitol, refused after his impeachment to vote for a conviction that would have disallowed this would-be dictator from ever again holding the presidency? Whose dedication to power over and against Democrats and liberals is so absolute that he endorsed the chief insurrectionist's third run for the presidency. Even this archconservative, ultra-partisan power monger, who possesses a demonstrated appetite for wreaking havoc if it would diminish his political enemies, was, like Dr. Frankenstein, unable to control his monster. History will remember.

Do you want to share a place in history with a certain politician who once decried the disparagement of women, criticized islamophobia, joined a coalition of moderate Republicans to counter party extremism, and understatedly suggested that untruthful statements might disqualify presidential candidates? Upon witnessing the populist power and electoral success of the Trump train, she bounded down the tracks after it, jumped on board, scampered forward to the locomotive, and began enthusiastically shoveling electoral lies, mendacious attacks on proponents of impeachment and the January 6 Select Committee, and risible exaltations of The Great Idol into the firebox. History will remember.

Consider instead these names: Robert LaFollette, George W. Norris, Margaret Chase Smith, Everett Dirksen, Gerald Ford, George H. W. Bush, Bob Dole, Richard Lugar, Olympia Snowe, and John McCain. And these names: Liz Cheney, Mitt Romney and Adam Kinzinger. History will remember.

Stand up.

This is a national state of emergency. Do not console, delude, and excuse yourself that it is less. Democracy and the good of the Republic (and America is both) depend on moral, intelligent and courageous leadership now. Certain politicians mentioned further above do not appear to care about history. But I hope you do.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

History will ultimately divide those who knew better into two groups when examining this disastrous chapter: constitutionalists and collaborators. Choose one.

What do you want for this nation? What do you want for your children and grandchildren? The nation, your children, and your grandchildren will remember you. And someday, looking back, hopefully not amid the charred wreckage of American democracy, you also will remember.

Stand Up.

Diogenes III

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