

Michael Edward Luckovich is an editorial cartoonist who has worked for The Atlanta Journal Constitution since 1989. He is the 2005 winner of the Reuben, the National Cartoonists Society's top award for cartoonist of the year, and is the recipient of two Pulitzer Prizes. ([Wikipedia](#))



Dear friends of democracy,
Today I am beginning a new personal newsletter in the interest of staying in dialog about the most important issues of the day – being well informed and exercising the civil right and duty we still have, to vote.

I say still, because since the 2020 election that right (which is central to our democracy) has been under siege. District gerrymandering, the passing of laws to restrict targeted groups of people from voting access, disseminating endless waves of false information, insisting on a stolen election, undermining the very concept of fact-based discourse by dealing in “alternative facts”, the incessant projection of one’s own party’s sins of abuse and corruption on its opponent party, instigating baseless trials and stalling-down the whole system of governing through denial to cooperate across party lines... All of this erodes our faith in our government’s legitimacy and ability to function.

“Two thirds of Republican voters (and nearly 3 in 10 Americans) continue to believe that the 2020 election was stolen...” ([Link to Article in The Conversation](#)) with zero evidence to support the claim. **Election Denialism** flies in the face of one of our democracy’s most basic principles: The peaceful transition of power. The fact that inciting an insurrection and trying to undermine the transition of power has actually benefitted Trump’s image, is just one compelling example of the grip conspiracy theories have gotten on the American consciousness. Feelings seem to have more sway than facts. And the current feeling seems to be, Trump is stronger than Biden.

An "ABC News/Ipsos poll found that economy and inflation were among the top issues for Americans in this upcoming presidential election, with more Americans saying they trust Trump on the issues than Biden. Eighty-eight percent of Americans in the survey said the economy was important when deciding whom to vote for, and 85 percent said the same for inflation.” ([The Hill](#))

Although economy experts insist the opposite is true, 46% of surveyed Americans said they trusted Trump to handle the economy better, while only 32% preferred Biden. 21 percent said they trusted neither of the presidential front-runners on the issue. This has been the real achievement of the republican propaganda on economics: to make people either believe lies, or lose faith altogether in the whole ball of yarn.

Fact based: By all measures, the Biden-Harris administration has been one of the most effective economically, socially and internationally since FDR. Like FDR, it has made those achievements coming out of a major world crisis, and in the face of an aggressively antagonistic parliament. Look here at the White House tally of achievements ([Biden-Harris](#)). In comparison, the Trump administration’s achievements ([Trump White House Tally](#)) are quickly summarized as a windfall for the richest 1% of Americans and carte blanche for the dirties industries through aggressive de-regulation while slashing budgets for the EPA, Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Agriculture, HUD ([New York Times](#)). Trying to

kill Obama-Care and gut Social Security was not beneficial for the general public. An historic \$3.2 trillion tax relief for the richest of the rich, however, together with hugely increased spending for Defense and Homeland Security, helped lead to a massive increase in national debt under Trump while putting America way behind in fighting climate change as it torpedoed international partnerships by withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the INF Treaty, the UNHRC, UNESCO, and the Paris Agreement, even threatening to leave NATO. This onerous shift to authoritarian posturing, befriending dictatorial regimes and isolationist politics lost us enormous respect and reliability worldwide.

Trump Bravado vs. Biden self-effacing reflectiveness. People seem to FEEL Trump is stronger. Do you believe the shouter, or the one who quietly gets things done? Why is there so much discussion of Biden's age and so little criticism of Trump's unintelligible ranting. When did character become less a important criteria for the job of the presidency than the ability to completely monopolize the news narrative by being a poster-boy of Bad-Assness and Ludicrousness? Does it make sense to send a strong man to the White House to confront the other Strongmen on the global political scene? Is electing an autocrat the way to prevent us from becoming an autocracy?

The 2018 Siena poll of 157 presidential scholars reported George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Thomas Jefferson as the top five US presidents. Donald Trump—entering the SCRI survey for the first time—joined Andrew Johnson and James Buchanan among the bottom three US presidents. The 2022 Siena poll had Franklin Roosevelt first, Lincoln second, and Washington third, with the bottom three as Trump, Buchanan, and Johnson. ([Wikipedia](#)). As of February 20, 2024 in a scholar's presidential ranking, Joe Biden was 14th of 45, Trump last.

It is paramount that rational finds its place again in the political process, and that voters inform themselves from reliable sources. Listen to opposing views! Challenge the salaciousness of scandalous fear mongering on the basis of reliable verification! Talk with people who have different views! Ask who is the most probable benefactor of the strategies behind the politics! And be wary of the Steve Bannon tactic when they “flood the Zone with shit.”

The coming election could be the most important since Lincoln. This is not just my opinion or hysterical hyperbole. Serious political commentators from around the world concur that democracy itself is on the ballot on Tuesday, November the 5th, 2024. Here are my recommendations for expert voices who serve as beacons of sanity in all the craziness.

- 1) **Heather Cox Richardson** is an American historian, author, and educator. She is a professor of history at Boston College, where she teaches courses on the American Civil War, the Reconstruction Era, the American West, and the Plains Indians. She publishes a daily newsletter that is free of charge. To subscribe go here ([Substack Letters from an American](#)). Rather than proselytizing, she expounds the on the historical background of current events, giving historical perspective that illuminates how we got here and where it could lead us. Here an example from June 25th: “Political power of the mythological image of the American cowboy” ([Link](#)).
- 2) **Joyce Vance** is an American lawyer who served as the United States attorney for the Northern District of Alabama from 2009 to 2017. She was one of the first five U.S. attorneys, and the first female U.S. attorney, nominated by President Barack Obama. She also writes a daily Newsletter entitled Civil Discourse. Her particular expertise is the judicial system and political events pertaining to it. Here is one good example from her Substack on June 26: “Let's Read Project 25 Together” ([Link](#))
Go here to ([sign up](#))

3) **Robert Reich** (1946) is an American professor, author, lawyer, and political commentator. He worked in the administrations of presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, and served as Secretary of Labor from 1993 to 1997 in the cabinet of President Bill Clinton. His daily Substack addresses, among other things, the economic side of current events. Here are two worth reading immediately ([The Taxing Difference](#)) and ([Why I'm scared sh*tless about Thursday](#)). Here is the place to go for his ([Substack archive](#)).

4) **Project 2025 – Mandate for Leadership (The Conservative Promise)** ([Download](#))

The Heritage Foundation, sometimes referred to simply as Heritage, is an American conservative think tank based in Washington, D.C. with strong ties to the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies, the Tea Party movement and Libertarianism. This is their 920-page blueprint for dismantling American democracy and installing an autocracy that would essentially consolidate power in the hands of a cabal of ultra-conservative elitist. In my mind, this is the true deep state, and it is part of their genius to know exactly who and what they are, and create myths that demonize liberals for being the ones and doing the things that they are all about. Their plan is sophisticated and their people very highly placed. Their roots stem from the most elite colleges of our nation. Their members hold prominent seats in our courts and legislatures and institutions of higher learning. With the present ultra-conservative supreme court, that the Heritage Foundation essentially created, our judicial system has finally reached a tipping-point. With overturning Roe vs. Wade, for the first time in history, the court has begun taking rights away from citizens, instead of granting them.

Thank you for your attention.

If you don't want to receive these letters
simply respond with a simple "No, thanks."

If it is helpful – please forward
to others who want to be informed.

With best wishes from Berlin
Paul Kustermann