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# COMMON SENSE II

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*Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today’s series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.*

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**October 2021      Social Infrastructure Issue      Vol. 16 Issue 9**

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## To Promote the General Welfare

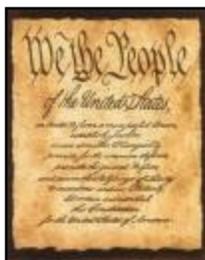
*By Valerie Conner*

*We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

That’s the Preamble to the US Constitution. So how are we doing lately?

- ◆ “We the People” is a phrase appropriated by the insurrectionist right to excuse any action to suit their need. The corollary is their adoption of the flag as theirs and theirs alone.
- ◆ “Establish Justice” needs a do-over since judges are now often selected for their political leanings Rather than their judicial validity.
- ◆ “Provide for the Common Defence” is partially dealt with by the massive amounts of money thrown at the military for our foreign endeavors, but little is done to provide for domestic defense such as physical infrastructure, quality and unbiased education, an affordable and equitable healthcare system, and fair policing.
- ◆ “Secure the Blessings of Liberty to Ourselves and Our Posterity” has really lost ground. Not only have people lost upward economic mobility but the refusal to address the climate crisis has totally destroyed our posterity’s future.
- ◆ “Promote the General Welfare” is a catch-all phrase that demands further discussion.

Most of the other categories of government responsibility eventually fall under “promote the general welfare.” That does not mean grudgingly offering food stamps and subsidized housing for generations. Rather it means creating a social and economic system that does not impede personal growth that provides transportation infrastructure



<http://www.cearta.ie/wp-content/>

for all, insists on quality free public education for today’s and tomorrow’s world for all, demands living wages for all, establishes safe and fair workplace rules for all, creates a healthcare system that not only allows everyone regardless of income to access the healthcare needed but monitors and enforces public health, insists that everyone regardless of his/her race, gender, orientation, creed, or station in life be treated with dignity and respect, and protects the world from climate disaster.



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The public at large is an entity that works best when it works in internal harmony. Those items listed above promote that harmony or “general welfare.”

For about 84 years from the FDR Administration to the Obama Administration—even including the Nixon Administration—we were on a bumpy road to meeting those goals. Since 2017, we’ve crashed into the ditch. President Biden’s Build Back Better initiative seeks to truly promote the general welfare by addressing those issues.

Critics say his proposals are too expensive. There are two pat responses:

1. There’s a difference between spending and investing. This plan seeks to invest in our collective future.
2. There’s a saying in public education circles, “If you think education is expensive is, try ignorance.”

The proudly ignorant policies of the Trump Administration has left this country poorer, angrier, sicker, more threatened, more ignorant, and more disheartened. As usual, after a Republican Administration, the Democrats are left with the task of clean up. Biden’s Build Back Better legislation is designed to do just that. It’s not costly; it’s a necessary investment in our general welfare.

# Our Divided House

By Eric Grimsrud

Two years prior to his presidency, Abraham Lincoln gave his famous “house divided” speech, part of which went as follows:

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other.

On the then controversial issue of slavery, he reasoned that the USA would have to decide one way or the other—would it allow the enslavement of the black portion of its population in order to meet the energy needs of America, or would it insist that all US citizens be free of such bondage? Lincoln claimed that this was the most important issue of the USA at that time, because he believed that a house divided against itself on fundamental issues such as this one cannot stand for long.



<https://static.nraahz.org/allthetropes/wiki/thumb/3/3b/House-divided.jpg/1200px-House-divided.jpg>

Prior to taking office in 1861, he also stated that if it would save the Union, he would go along with a compromised plan in which slavery would be allowed to continue in the South if the new states being added to the Union be free of slavery. Lincoln reasoned that with such an agreement, the USA would still eventually join the other emerging nations of the Western world that were abandoning all forms of slavery.

Unfortunately, the Southern states refused to consider any such compromised views on this issue and instead tried to withdraw from the Union. This President Lincoln would not allow, and it took a civil war to get the USA reunited and the 13th Amendment to our Constitution in 1865 to declare that all citizens of the USA would thereafter be free. Thus, Lincoln’s prediction that the USA would become “all one thing or all the other” came to be sooner than he expected.

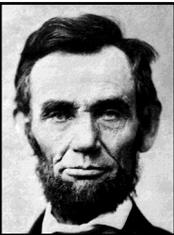
In the USA today we have a very similar division of opinion that is sufficiently contradictory as to again bring into question the survivability of the USA as a functioning entity. As in the Civil War era, the main difference between these two groups is related to the means of energy production pre-

ferred by each group. As in the Civil War era, one side today favors an existing well-entrenched means of energy production that has become exceedingly problematic and, if continued, is sure to be recognized as such in the next decade or two. The other side favors the development of new methods of energy production that are sustainable into the foreseeable future.

Those who recognize that global warming constitutes a real and grave threat to the future of humanity tend to accept the advice provided by our most respected scientific organizations that say we must leave fossil fuels in the ground because our atmosphere is already over loaded with the major greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. The other group strongly favors policies and solutions that will not threaten existing business interest that rely on fossil fuels, even though modern science tells us that we must leave them in the ground.

Because this climate change issue is by far the most important one on the table today, it would be most beneficial to get the participants of this debate onto the same page with respect to the basic approaches they will take in coming to their decisions. The fundamental question in this case is are we going to follow the recommendation of modern science or are we not? As with Lincoln prior to and in the Civil War era, we can be sure which side will win out in the long run. In the next decade or two, monumental changes in our climate will continue to show that the dire predictions of climate scientists have been essentially correct. As those changes continue year after year, at some point even the fossil fuel advocates of today will finally be forced to abandon their support of fossil fuel use, and our “house” will no longer be divided. The critically important point then will be, “Will it be too late at that future point for even forceful actions to stop the advance of global warming?” While we do not yet know the answer to that question, we do know that the sooner we commit ourselves to a fossil-fuel-free world, the better our chances of survival will be.

The recently elected Biden Administration is committed to the creation of carbon-free economies throughout the world. Achieving that goal will progressively be made more likely as both sides of our divided house accept the notion that modern science provides our best forecasts of what Mother Nature will do in response to mankind’s presence and activities on planet Earth.



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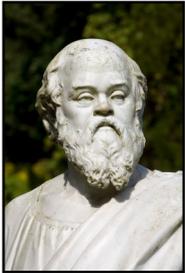


<https://blogmedia.lse.ac.uk/blogs.dir/58/files/2021/03/New-blog-image-test-1-3->

# Democracy: Bought and Paid For

By Bob Passi

Although we ostensibly live in a democratic nation, democracy as a meaningful concept has been disappearing before our eyes and before the eyes



Socrates of Athens:  
"Our democracy is destroying itself because it misrepresented the right to liberty and equality. It taught the citizens to regard disrespect as a right, lawlessness as liberty, impertinence as equality and anarchy as enjoyment."

<https://people-equation.com/wp-content/uploads/Socrates.jpg>

of the world. It has been hollowed out, stripped of its intrinsic meaning, and is now used to support some of the most destructive choices in human history.

How is it possible that democracy could have been so emasculated that it can only survive as an underground movement in a nation that was the first modern incarnation of democracy in the world and was seen as the beacon of democracy for decades, if not centuries? The short answer is money. Democracy, as it now exists in this nation, has been bought and paid for and now serves other masters than the ordinary citizens of this nation.

## Monetizing Life:

Capitalism, especially the most radical capitalism at the heart of new-liberal economics, tends to treat everything as a commodity to be monetized and used as a resource to produce some product or to be sold to produce capital. It has little to no concern for the intrinsic value of anything except capital. Therefore the accumulation of capital is its goal, and only the monetary value of things is of importance. It is not hard to see that such an approach discounts or ignores the human value of things or the spiritual or natural value of things. Humans are seen as human resources to be used to produce wealth with their labor or as a source of financial resources to be mined for economic growth. A tree is not seen as part of a natural web of life but instead as the source of board feet of lumber. Natural resources exist to be turned into products to be consumed by the citizenry of the nation or of the world.

## Monetizing Democracy:

This process of monetizing life also includes language. This process begins with stripping words and language itself of their intrinsic meaning and putting them to work to serve the purposes of expanding the power of capitalism. The very word "democracy" is an example. Its most basic meaning is rule by the people and is to be a vehicle of self-determination for ordinary citizens of a nation. Its intrinsic value, its principles, has been pushed

aside and its meaning has been shifted so it seems to be that capitalism is the prerequisite of democracy. The result is that neo-liberal economics can be exported to the world under the rubric of spreading democracy.

Having allowed those with money to co-opt and control the basic levers of power within this nation, we have allowed an economic system, capitalism, to become preeminent and to use the term "democracy" to support its abuses. As radical capitalism once again began to gain control of the directions of the nation after the election of 1968, it spent much of its burgeoning profits to begin to buy the trappings of democracy for its own use. In the process, the ideals, the real spirit of democracy, were lost as the term became a commodity to be traded in the economic market place. It became an empty term.

## Political Theatre:

We live in a continuous state of illusion to distract us from noticing that no real change is occurring, no significant issues are being resolved, and our democracy and our lives are continuing on a downward trajectory.

In the place of anything that might resolve significant issues or lead to real change or improvement in the system, we are given political theatre—and we seem not only to accept it, but also to be willing to become totally immersed in it, as though our very lives depend on it.



<https://as1.flickr.net/>

Political theatre is when the activities of the governing bodies have been scripted and choreographed to provide the appearance of real debate while the outcome has been predetermined by those who are writing the script.

What goes on is a very elaborate production, presented on the stage of governance and reported by a willing media for a national and international audience. It comes complete with program notes, explanation, and interpretation, with the immediate analysis of critics, pundits, and talking heads. We, as spectators on the other side of the screen, are encouraged to applaud or boo the actors: those actors all know their roles and have been well trained to play them. They all receive their actors' pay with bonuses for those who best entertain the spectators. For the next several hours and often days after each performance, we are entertained by

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continuous comment and analysis until a new act is ready or another entirely new play is written.

The speaking roles are given only to those who, after arduous political auditions in their home states, have been carefully vetted by those in charge of the process, the producers, for the big-time national stage. If they are deemed worthy, *i.e.*, they will stay on script and accept the casting decisions, they are trotted out for their final audition with financial backing and full PR support to see if they can pass the final audition: the screen test before a national audience. If they perform well enough, they will be chosen over the fully vetted candidate of the other party. (In some rare cases, they may lose to a candidate unvetted by either party, at which point they lose all political face and are often relegated to the dustbin of political history.)

The process is not dissimilar to being willing to pass the casting couch test to win a role. Will the potential candidates prove to the producer that they are willing to do the bidding of the producer, no matter the cost to their honor or integrity?

After passing the screen test, any who refuse or even hesitate to play their assigned roles are relegated to minor roles or discredited as legitimate actors. They become like itinerant actors trying to find enough work to survive and ready to step in at a moment's notice as a replacement. If they are really effective, they may find audi-



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ences outside of the major theatre circuit, playing in unaffiliated small town theatres for the ordinary folks and relying on older plays or writing their own scripts.

The big time theatres are elegant, and there is a constant striving for the appearance of realism. There are international theatres, national theatres, regional theatres, state theatres, county theatres, and local theatres to keep us all entertained, so we have something like soap operas to follow with bated breath to pour our passion and our hearts and souls into.

Meanwhile the playwrights work tirelessly with a horde of hired help to create the illusion of realism so that many do not even think it is a theatrical production, but instead believe it is real people debating real issues with the outcome up in the air until the denouement, when it all turns out as ex-

pected, or there is an unexpected but carefully scripted ending.

The outcomes of the productions all fall into the same general pattern: they always end up with the dominant interest winning. Sometimes the non-dominant forces win small victories to give the perception of balance, but all the major issues are ultimately won by the dominating forces.

That is why they wrote the plays!

If we got back to real democracy, without the domination of an economic elite as puppet-masters, we could relegate the theatre back to one of the art forms which might make social comments without the pretense of reality and bring back nontheatrical but real and open governance once again.

### Going Underground:

The very survival of democracy with its basic focus on self-determination becomes a real issue. All the existential issues of the day require the survival of democracy if there is to be any hope for not only the survival of the human race but also of the planet itself. It means that the arrogance of the neo-liberal economic model must be abandoned and replaced by a clear-eyed focus on a new humility that accepts human life as simply part of the planetary web of life necessary for sustainable solutions.



<https://knightfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/mg2-2.jpg?w=1600>

Of course, there always have been those who realized what was occurring and who fought a rear-guard action to slow the spread of the dismantling of the real force of democracy. They have been overwhelmed by the massive forces of acquisitive capitalism and the technical and electronic tools at their disposal as well as the domination of the media. There were also the quiet but intimidating forces of the military and police, the courts, and the giant sweep of the security state.

### Reclaiming Democracy:

So how do we reclaim democracy and resurrect it? First, we must realize that the current political arena is so contaminated and corrupted that it offers no realistic path toward such a reclamation. It is not that the system is no longer viable but only that those who have gained power have succeeded in bending the system to serve an economic elite and not the ordinary citizens of this nation. So, instead of spending time, resources, and energy on those old elective politics, we must develop a new poli-

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tics that operates outside of the old norms and begins to focus the will and intent of the people on real, democratic solutions and allow the old politics to shrivel without any support from the people.

This means that people quietly begin to work on solutions to our existential problems through cooperative and inclusive action. This means finding more workable solutions and not waiting for permission. It is like fixing the leak in the boat without waiting for official permission with all its meetings and delays while the boat sinks.

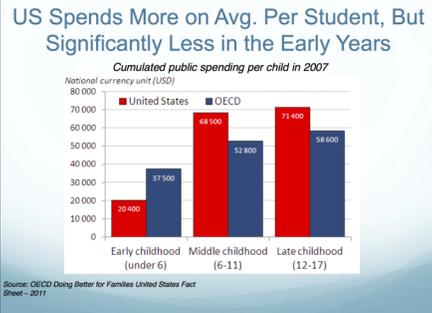
It is about finding better alternatives and adapting them. It is about showing that we are not simply human resources to be used for economic ends, that we have not been bought and paid for but are citizens who insist on restoring real democracy to save our nation, our American spirit, the human race, and the planet.

## Early Childhood Education: A Personal View

By Donna Bolstorff\*

It is my personal belief and experience that education begins at birth. I believe that to be a vibrant and inclusive community, all its citizens need to have a safe, high quality education that begins at birth and never ends, so a person's lifestyle is a choice and not a forgone conclusion. With education, if you are born in poverty, you don't need to stay in poverty. I believe that early childhood education creates a better life, and a better life creates a better informed nation, I believe that the education of our young children takes an entire village, and the village in this case is the United States of America.

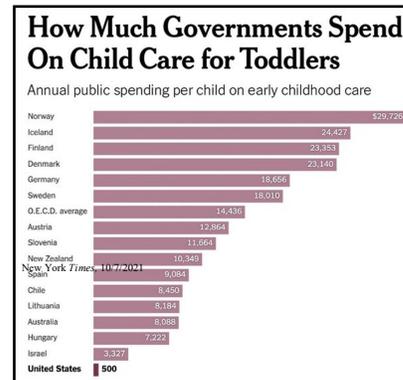
Quite often, because of affordability, the discussion of what is best for their children takes place in many but not all families. Those discussions involve whether it's better to have one parent stay home to rear the children, whether it's better to live with grandparents or siblings,



whether it's better to have childcare in a family home or in a commercial setting, and whether it's better for children to attend public or private pre-school. In my case, I tried to remedy that by both

staying at home, and then starting my own childcare program in a rented house near a college in a small town. I named the place A Child's World. From that experience I know the ecstasy and the agony of early childhood education.

President Biden's Build Back Better legislation of 2,465 pages<sup>1</sup> is currently under discussion in Congress. In my opinion the ideas in it give me hope that a multi-



generational approach to a safe, high quality education for our youngest children will continue to get better because of a historical level of financing never seen before.

Ashley Hackett reveals that it is estimated at \$20 billion in 2022, \$30 billion in 2023, and \$40 billion annually from 2024-2027.<sup>2</sup>

That sounds like a lot of money, and it is. But I believe that the main question we must answer is how much a child is worth to us. We need to stop emphasizing money and focus on all children's lives, not just a few selected children. Some of the following issues are now being addressed by the Congress together with federal, state, and national early childhood leaders:

**Universal Childcare for All Children.** It is estimated that parents spend an average of \$8,355 per child annually to secure year around care.<sup>3</sup> If this section is passed, it can increase the employment opportunities for both parents care givers and impact the household budget.

**Guaranteed Universal Pre-school for All Children.** Payment would come from the federal government through the state for 100% of its expenditures for pre-school services. I believe pre-school is important because a child needs knowledge and social ability as soon as possible. Also, this would give all parents a choice of sending their child to either a publicly funded pre-school or a privately run pre-school. If I understand correctly, the money follows the child, not the program.

**Permanent Expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCCTC).** It "provides a refundable credit of up to 50% of childcare costs for a child under age 13 or any dependent physically or mentally incapable of self-care. Eligible childcare expenses are limited to \$8,000 per de-

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pendent up to \$16,000 for two or more dependents.”<sup>4</sup>

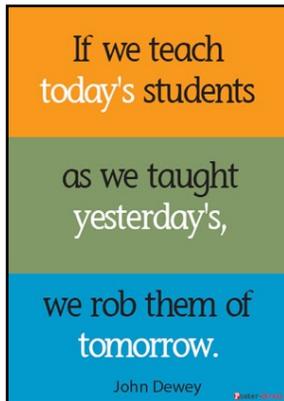
**Permanent Expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC).** According to the US Treasury, an eligible household will receive \$3,600 per year per child under age six and \$3,000 per year per child aged seven through seventeen.<sup>5</sup>

**Federal Paid Parental Leave.** Erum Salam provides a summary, “Up to three days of bereavement leave for a family death, twelve weeks of paid leave after adopting, fostering, or giving birth to a new child.”<sup>6</sup> (On CNN October 21st, President Biden admitted that in current negotiation the twelve weeks have been reduced to four.)

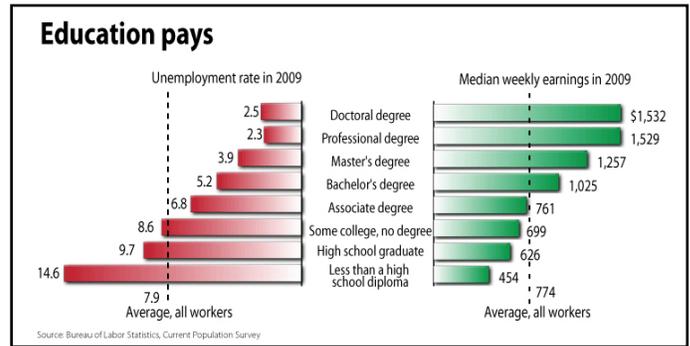
**Establish Childcare Wage Grant Program.** “This would increase wages and benefits for childcare providers,” points out Mr. Salam.<sup>7</sup> This goes to my earlier question of how much a child is worth. We want the best childcare providers, so let’s pay for the best!

Clifton Painter says that “Financing for these programs would come from raising the top corporate tax rate, increasing the progressivity of the tax code by raising marginal income tax rates faced by higher earners and corporations while expanding several refundable tax credits for low and middle income earners.”<sup>8</sup>

My husband started first grade in a one room schoolhouse. Times have changed and so has the knowledge that our children need to accumulate. We can no longer try to squeeze all the knowledge needed into the traditional K-12 education model. We need to be innovative. That is one of the reasons why early childhood development and pre-school for all children is so important. I believe our country needs to develop a birth to death education system for its citizens to be a peaceful, vibrant, safe, informed democracy. A study indicates that Canada is at the top of the list as having the most educated 25-64 year old adults in the world at 56.27%. The US is sixth on the list with 45.67%. The countries that are the safest and most peaceful are Iceland, New Zealand, Portugal, Austria, Denmark, Canada, Singapore, and the Czech Republic.<sup>9</sup> Do these statistics reveal how the United States of America feels about our youngest children?



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Perhaps, if Congress passes the Build Back Better Plan, the United States will no longer be an outlier at the bottom of the world’s developed countries, offering annual public spending per child for toddlers. For example, Norway spends \$29,726 per child while we spend \$55 per toddler.<sup>10</sup>

In essence, all generations must be involved in the discussion to decide the worth of a child and how families can best educate him or her. As a historical giant leap forward, I hope the entire Build Back Better Plan passes in Congress and President Biden signs it into law. It will contribute to having a safe, high quality life for American families with young children—ONLY BETTER!!

CBSnews.com, 19 Oct 2021

Ashley Hackett, Staff Writer, “What Democrats mean by ‘universal childcare’ in the Build Back Better Act”, minnpost.com 22 Sept 2021

www.cnb.com, 09 May 2021)

<https://www.taxpolicycenter.org>

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The Guardian, Erum Salam, “What’s actually in Biden’s Build Back Better bill? And how would it affect you? Mon 18 Oct 2021, www.theguardian.com

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Economic Cooperation and Development, Elizabeth Davis and Aaron Sojourner, the Hamilton Project, New York Times, 07 Oct 2021.

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\*computer generated/volunteer labor\*

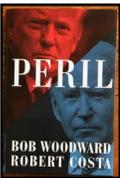


## The Making and Breaking of a Country

By Valerie Conner

For all his faults, Trump has taught this country a valuable lesson. Until he took power, we thought our democracy was strong, our Constitution powerful, and our institutions well-established. That's because we assumed and our institutions assumed that for the most part our government would be run by people of honor and integrity, that is, there was line that even the most corrupt would not cross. Trump proved us wrong. Bullying and cheating his way through life, he was all too willing to thwart conventions and like a spoiled brat insist on doing things his way, legality, tradition, and the Constitution be damned. That put this country in great peril.

For the first time since George Washington relinquished the Presidency to John Adams in 1797, the transfer of power was neither civil nor peaceful. In *Peril*, journalists Bob Woodward and Robert Costa recount what happened leading up to the insurrectionists' assault on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, and the beginning of the Biden Administration. They focus on four major players: Trump, Pence, Milley, and Biden.



Although much of what is in the book is familiar to readers who follow political current events, the authors draw on the hundreds of deep background interviews of more than 200 people who were there, which draws a coherent picture of what hap-

pened and what motivated many of the players and reveals some new reporting.

Joint Chief of Staff General Mark Milley describes his unwitting march across Lafayette Square to the strange church photo op for Trump. He also talks about his concern about the increasingly erratic Trump in the days leading up to the inauguration and the steps he took—with the knowledge of the acting Secretary of Defense—to protect against Trump's use of military and possibly nuclear force. This included his phone calls to his Chinese counterpart who was concerned that Trump might start a “wag the dog” war.



<https://orinotribune.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/mark-milley-trump->

Trump's erratic, anti-American actions and statements had started years before. The catalyst for Biden's running for President was Trump's statement about the Charlottesville protest that there were “good people on both sides.” The authors recount aides' descriptions of the events inside both camps.



<https://www.onystruth.com/wp-content/>

Mike Pence was put in the position of choosing to do his Constitutional duty of announcing the certified Presidential winner while the raging mob sought to hang him and having to call in the National Guard to quell the riot since Trump would not do his duty.

We survived that day, and the inauguration ultimately went off without a violent hitch, but Trump continues to try to stymie Biden's Administration. Woodward and Costa show how close we came to losing our democracy and how close we remain in peril of a replay of January 6<sup>th</sup>.



<https://opensiddur.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/president-biden->

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

Event	Date /Time	Location
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Thursdays 2:00-5:00	DFL Headquarters
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)	3rd Tuesday 6:30	Suspended
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday 6:30	via Zoom
DFL Social Club & Lunch	1st Wednesday Noon	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	3rd Wednesday 5:30	DFL Headquarters
Working Families Alliance	Suspended	Dutchroom
Earth Circle	Suspended	GR Public Library
Circles of Support	Suspended	811 NE 4th St. GR
Haven: A Place for All	Mondays 5:30 Zoom	218-328-4450
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	November 15, 2021	conray@arvig.net