



NEWSLETTER

November 2024 ISSUE#: HV009

Mercer We the People of Hopewell Valley is a steady source of news to heal the accelerating erosion of our fundamental freedoms nationally and locally.

Embrace our First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Source: <https://billofrightsintstitute.org/primary-sources/bill-of-rights>

Kind regards,
Publius Bonhomme Richard, Editor

HOW TO CONTACT US:

Email us at: info@mercervethepeople.com

Please email us to be included for future newsletters.

Printed copies of the newsletter will be made available at local libraries, select senior location(s). Any other suggested location(s) please let us know.

Editor's Note

On January 27, 1838 a young 28-year old novice politician, Abraham Lincoln, delivered "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions" an address before the Young Men's Lyceum (a debating society) of Springfield, Illinois. The speech which has become known as the "Lyceum Address" gave a prescient glimpse of his own future and possibly that of America's.

Lincoln's voices his concerns with the Founding generation fading away and a new generation rising in his opening words:

*"We, when mounting the stage of existence, found ourselves the legal inheritors of these fundamental blessings. We toiled not in the acquirement or establishment of them--**they are a legacy bequeathed us, by a once hardy, brave, and patriotic, but now lamented and departed race of ancestors.** Their's was the task (and nobly they performed it) to possess themselves, and through themselves, us, of this goodly land; and to uprear upon its hills and its valleys, a political edifice of liberty and equal rights; 'tis ours only, to transmit these, the former, unprofaned by the foot of an invader; the latter, undecayed by the lapse of time and untorn by usurpation, to the latest generation that fate shall permit the world to know. **This task of gratitude to our fathers, justice to ourselves, duty to posterity, and love for our species in general, all imperatively require us faithfully to perform.***

How then shall we perform it? At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide."

Lincoln spoke of his concerns with the growing mob violence threatening the government, as well as the rise of ambitious politicians that may be tempted to operate outside of the boundaries of the law to secure their own moment of glory.

"But new reapers will arise, and they, too, will seek a field. It is to deny, what the history of the world tells us is true, to suppose that men of ambition and talents will not continue to spring up amongst us. And, when they do, they will as naturally seek the gratification of their ruling passion, as others have so done before them. The question then, is, can that gratification be found in supporting and maintaining an edifice that has been erected by others? Most certainly it cannot. Many great and good men sufficiently qualified for any task they should undertake, may ever be found, whose ambition would inspire to nothing beyond a seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or a presidential chair; but such belong not to the family of the lion, or

the tribe of the eagle. What! think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon?--Never! Towering genius distains a beaten path. It seeks regions hitherto unexplored.--It sees no distinction in adding story to story, upon the monuments of fame, erected to the memory of others. It denies that it is glory enough to serve under any chief. It scorns to tread in the footsteps of any predecessor, however illustrious. It thirsts and burns for distinction; and, if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freemen. Is it unreasonable then to expect, that some man possessed of the loftiest genius, coupled with ambition sufficient to push it to its utmost stretch, will at some time, spring up among us? And when such a one does, it will require the people to be united with each other, attached to the government and laws, and generally intelligent, to successfully frustrate his designs."

Lincoln ends his speech with these prophetic words:

"They were the pillars of the temple of liberty; and now, that they have crumbled away, that temple must fall, unless we, their descendants, supply their places with other pillars, hewn from the solid quarry of sober reason. Passion has helped us; but can do so no more. It will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defence.--Let those materials be moulded into general intelligence, sound morality, and in particular, a reverence for the constitution and laws: and, that we improved to the last; that we remained free to the last; that we revered his name to the last; that, during his long sleep, we permitted no hostile foot to pass over or desecrate his resting place; shall be that which to learn **the last trump shall awaken our WASHINGTON.**

Upon these let the proud fabric of freedom rest, as the rock of its basis; and as truly as has been said of the only greater institution, 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'"

Source and the full speech: <https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/lyceum.htm>

Call for Contributors!

MercerWe the People of Hopewell Valley is looking for contributors to write articles, especially informing the community about what is happening at local meetings. If you're interested in writing for us about that or any other topic, whether it is monthly or as needed, please reach out to us at info@mercervethepeople.com

In this Issue:

- Election 2024
 - Local Feature (By We the People of HV): Bob Zansitis, Candidate for Hopewell Township Committee, Answers Questions From Neighbors Against Overdevelopment in Hopewell Valley
 - Local Feature (By Kevin Mooney): Will Catholics Pick the Next President?
- PILOTs and School Referendum
 - Local Feature (By Dufresne): We Need a New Approach, Not the Same Old Tired Rhetoric
- Education
 - Local Feature (By Sylvia Kocses): The Importance of the Review and Revision of HVRSD Policy 5756: Transgender and Nonconforming Students
 - Local Feature (By Sylvia Kocses): Delay the Smartphone: Wait Until 8th Campaign
- Election Integrity
 - Local Feature (By Kevin Mooney): Lawsuit: New Jersey Election Officials Broke the Law, Disenfranchised Hundreds of Voters with Missing Ballots in 2022
- Public Corner
- TruthBTold
- At the Movies, Bookstores
- We the People of Interest

Election 2024

The Time Has Come to Cast Your Vote

Make sure you have a plan to vote. Let's make this election too big to rig!

By John Galt

IMPORTANT REMINDER: If you vote in person, please review your ballot after it prints to make sure your selections are accurate.

We are hearing reports that when a voter prints their ballot, their vote was switched to another candidate.

Important Election Dates to Remember:

- October 29, 2024: Vote-By-Mail (VBM) Application Deadline (By Mail)
- November 4, 2024, by 3pm: Vote-By-Mail (VBM) Application Deadline (In-Person)
- October 26, 2024 – November 3, 2024: Early Voting Period
- November 5, 2024: General Election Day
- November 5, 2024: Vote-By-Mail (VBM) Return Deadline (by 8pm return by drop box or in US mail)

Vote for Bob! Vote for John! Write-in Jennifer and Mark!

What about Bob?

Hopewell needs a **CHANGE** to get back to responsive government that works for **YOU**

Bob wants to:

- ▶ STOP OVER-DEVELOPMENT
- ▶ SAFEGUARD OUR ENVIRONMENT
- ▶ LOWER PROPERTY TAXES
- ▶ RESTORE TRANSPARENCY & BALANCE
- ▶ PROTECT OUR SCHOOLS

Bob Zansitis HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
VOTE FOR BOB TODAY

Printed by P2 Inc Hopewell, P.O. Box 101, Pennington, NJ 08534

Consider these Personal Choice Write-ins over the incumbents. Fill in the dot so your vote is counted.

There are multiple ways you can cast your vote in Mercer County.

Vote By Mail (VBM)

Any voter may apply for a VBM by completing the Application for Vote-By-Mail and returning the application to the Mercer County Clerk. Here is a short video that explains how to fill out your application. Mercer County Clerk Promotes Vote By Mail Initiative (youtube.com) You can download a VBM application here nj.gov/state/elections/vote-by-mail.shtml

Remember, VBM ballots can be mailed or deposited in Vote-By-Mail drop boxes located at the Mercer County Board of Elections office at 930 Spruce St, Lawrence NJ 08648, in Hopewell at the Township Administration building at 201 Washington Crossing-Pennington Rd, Titusville NJ 08560 or any other drop box location within Mercer County by 8pm on November 5th. Visit the county's website to find out more: <https://www.mercercounty.org/government/county-clerk/elections/vote-by-mail-drop-box-location>

It is too late to be removed from the VBM list, so if you received a VBM ballot, you must either return it or vote provisionally during early voting or on election day.

Day of Voting- November 5th

You can always choose to vote at your polling location from 6am to 8pm on Election Day, November 5th 2024. We now have 14 election districts in Hopewell Twp and some locations have changed. To verify your polling location, check your sample ballot or find your election district here <https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/polling-place-search>

OFFICIAL SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION BALLOT
Hopewell Valley Regional

OFFICE TITLE	Column J Board of Education	Column K Board of Education	PERSONAL CHOICE
Members of the Board of Education 3 Year Term - Vote for Two	Experienced, Student-Centered JACQUELINE GENOVESI 1J ☐	Equity, Community, Success DHRUV KAPADIA 1K ☐	Jennifer DiDonato ☒ Mark Austin ☐
Member of the Board of Education 1 Year Unexpired Term - Vote for One	NO PETITION FILED		Mark Austin ☒
Member of the Board of Education 2 Year Unexpired Term - Vote for One	JOHN SLOTMAN 1M ☒		☐

Here is a list of the Hopewell Valley locations for 2024:

<u>HOPWELL BOROUGH</u>	
Hopewell Borough Hall, 88 East Broad St.	District 1, 2
<u>HOPWELL TOWNSHIP</u>	
Hopewell Twp. Mun. Bldg., 201 Wash Cross-Penn Rd., Auditorium	District 1,7,9
Hopewell Twp. Mun. Bldg., 201 Wash Cross-Penn Rd., Mun. Ct Rm.	District 13,14
Union Fire Company, 1396 River Rd, Rt 29, Auditorium	District 2,3
Hopewell Presbyterian Church, 80 West Broad St.,	District 6,12
Project Freedom Community Center, 700 Heritage Ct.	District 10,11
Pennington Borough Hall, 30 N. Main St .	District 4
Pennington Borough Senior Center, 393 Reading St.	District 5, 8
<u>PENNINGTON BOROUGH</u>	
Pennington Borough Hall, 30 N. Main St .	District 1
Pennington Borough Senior Center, 393 Reading St.	District 2, 3

Voting is not only your God given right it is also a privilege and as such you need to be an informed voter. In 2021 The American Family Association (AFA) Action created an iVoterGuide to educate registered voters about the candidates in their area. On their website you can enter your address to find out information about the candidates in your area. You can find the iVoterGuide on their website <https://ivoterguide.com/>

Remember – your vote matters!

You can help us clean up the voter roles

You can help us clean up the voter roles! Did you receive a vote-by-mail ballot (VBM) or a VBM application for someone who does not live at your address?

Follow these easy steps if you receive a vote-by-mail ballot for someone who does not live at your address:

1. Write “does not live at this address” or “deceased” on the envelope.
2. Place it back in your mailbox or any Mercer County drop box.
3. The ballot will be returned to Board of Elections so that they can take further action.
4. Please take a picture of the envelope with the name and reason and email it to info@mercervethepeople.com so that we can check the voter rolls and make sure it was properly removed.

Bob Zansitis, Candidate for Hopewell Township Committee, Answers Questions From Neighbors Against Overdevelopment in Hopewell Valley

QUESTION: Do you believe that Hopewell township should negotiate PILOTS (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) in Round 4 of affordable housing? Do you believe that PILOTS have a positive impact or negative impact on the community?

BOB’S ANSWER: I believe there is a negative impact on the community. The PILOT does not belong in Hopewell Township. The PILOT program was meant for urban redevelopment, not residential projects, and its misuse is unfairly burdening Hopewell Township taxpayers. I believe reforming the PILOT program is a necessary step if removal isn’t an option.

Focusing on more accountable, community-driven solutions will help us address the shortcomings of the current program while still fostering growth. Most importantly, we must work closely with our neighboring boroughs, ensuring that all benefit from these resources and move forward together.

This program has significantly impacted Hopewell, revealing critical shortcomings in funding allocation that have strained relationships and hindered essential infrastructure improvements. One major negative effect has been the fallout between Hopewell Township and its neighboring boroughs, Hopewell and Pennington. The oversight in distributing PILOT funds has resulted in 100% of the funding being directed solely to Hopewell Township, leaving both boroughs and the school district with nothing. This imbalance has not only fostered resentment and tension among local governments but has also compromised the ability of the boroughs to maintain and develop their infrastructure.

Furthermore, the lack of funding for the school district exacerbates these issues. The PILOT funds, which were intended to support community growth and infrastructure development, did not reach the schools, forcing the district to seek an \$87 million referendum from local residents for essential upgrades. This situation highlights the urgent need for adequate funding through the PILOT program, as it should serve as a crucial resource for all affected entities, including the boroughs and the school district. Without equitable financial support, the community faces challenges in both governance and education, undermining the overall well-being of Hopewell and its residents. Addressing these funding discrepancies is vital for fostering collaboration among local governments and ensuring that essential services, particularly education, receive the investment they deserve.

QUESTION: As you know, Committee meetings restrict public questions and comments to three minutes a person. The public questions are not answered directly. Instead, the public has to wait until the end of the question session, when their question might or might not be answered. This is not true of other committee meetings, e.g., Zoning.

Many people are concerned that this approach stifles discussion of the issues facing Hopewell Township and insulates Committee members from criticism. Will you commit to remove the three-minute limit, and have Committee members answer questions directly?

BOB'S ANSWER: I support the idea of extending public comment time, but I recognize the committee must adhere to Roberts Rules of Order. I would urge any reader to become familiar with these rules as they drive much of the framework and structure of committee meetings. These rules allow for specific public comment periods and limit individual speaking time, but they also provide some flexibility. The committee can establish these time frames based on community expectations and can adjust them as needed. Given that attendance at meetings has historically been low, I believe we can advocate for five-minute speaking slots in the future if elected.

According to Robert's Rules of Order, it's generally advised not to respond to public comments. The chair may offer brief factual information if necessary, but must avoid any back-and-forth exchanges. The only way to change this rule is to propose an amendment to Robert's Rules directly.

QUESTION: You have claimed that you plan to "halt overdevelopment" in Hopewell. Given that Hopewell will shortly be facing another round of legally required affordable housing building, how precisely do you intend to achieve this?

BOB'S ANSWER: Overdevelopment in the southern tier of Hopewell Township is a pressing issue that threatens the community's well-being and sustainability. As the area continues to expand rapidly, we are reaching a critical point where our existing infrastructure is strained beyond capacity. The current sewer system, managed by ELSA, is insufficient to accommodate the growing population and the demands of new developments. This lack of adequate sewer capacity not only leads to potential public health risks but also hampers the overall quality of life for residents.

Moreover, the emphasis on development has overshadowed the need for comprehensive infrastructure planning. Without a strategic approach to development, we risk creating a situation where roads are congested, emergency services are delayed, and essential amenities become overloaded. Proper planning is crucial to ensure that the community can thrive, balancing growth with the necessary services that support daily life.

Another significant concern is the impact of overdevelopment on our agricultural lands. In Hopewell Township, approximately 50% of our agricultural space is at risk of being sacrificed for residential and commercial projects. Agriculture plays a vital role in our local economy, providing not only food but also contributing to the cultural heritage and environmental sustainability of the region. Preserving these lands is essential for maintaining the character and identity of our community as it relates to our master plan.

In conclusion, overdevelopment in Hopewell Township is a multifaceted issue that requires immediate attention. We must prioritize better infrastructure planning to ensure that the community can support its residents effectively. Additionally, it is imperative to protect our agricultural lands from encroachment, as they are a vital resource that contributes to our local identity and sustainability. By taking a balanced approach, we can foster a healthy, thriving community that respects both its growth potential and its agricultural roots.

QUESTION: You have claimed that Hopewell has engaged in "targeted reassessments" for the purpose of increasing the property taxes it collects from residents while lowering the tax rate. What precisely do you mean by "targeted reassessments"? What evidence do you have that this has occurred? How precisely do you intend to lower the tax burden in Hopewell? Do you plan on cutting services to achieve this, and, if so, which services will you cut?

BOB'S ANSWER: In recent years, Democratic candidates have frequently campaigned on the promise of lowering taxes. However, this strategy often obscures the reality of the situation. For instance, in Brandon Farms, while the tax rate was technically reduced, property assessments for most residents increased significantly. As a result, 4 out of 5 Democratic officeholders experienced an actual tax break, leaving Uma and the majority of residents in Brandon Farms facing a higher tax burden, despite the rate cut. It should be noted that revenues still went up, and the tax rate has increased for the last two years. The Township touting a tax rate cut was entirely fraudulent and misleading.

To genuinely alleviate the tax burden in Hopewell Township, we must address two critical issues. First, we should consider selling some of our underutilized real estate assets. Currently, properties such as Oldis Farm, the Timberlane Horse Center, and Pennytown remain idle when they could be generating revenue for the township.

Second, we need to reevaluate our practice of granting untaxed land to organizations like DNR Greenways and FOHVOS. While preserving open space is important, we must ensure that it does not come at the cost of potential tax revenue. By strategically managing these assets, we can create a more sustainable financial future for our community.

QUESTION: You have stated that you intend to spread development throughout the Township, as the southern tier is already overburdened with the development of several thousand new housing units. How precisely do you intend to enable development in those parts of the Township that have neither sewer service nor water service?

BOB'S ANSWER: First, an Infrastructure Audit should be conducted to assess current capabilities and prioritize areas based on community needs and development potential. Unlike the current approach, engaging residents through public forums will ensure their concerns and needs shape the development process.

Next, we must establish a Development Framework that includes zoning adjustments for mixed-use areas, fostering both residential and commercial growth. Collaborating with utility providers, we can create a phased plan to extend necessary services, potentially leveraging public-private partnerships for cost-sharing and efficiency.

Environmental sustainability should be a priority, incorporating practices like rain gardens and permeable pavements into new developments. Ongoing community outreach is crucial; a Development Advisory Committee comprising residents and local leaders can help oversee plans, ensuring they align with community values. By setting measurable goals and conducting regular reviews, we can adapt to feedback and changing conditions, ultimately fostering a fair and vibrant community. Following a detailed plan, Hopewell Township can ensure that development is distributed fairly across all regions, enhancing the quality of life for all residents and fostering a vibrant, interconnected community. This approach not only respects the master plan but also prioritizes the needs and voices of all township residents, paving the way for sustainable growth.

QUESTION: You have publicly indicated that you believe that in addition to the several thousand housing units that are currently being built in the southern tier you also support the development of retail and Big Box stores—Big Box stores being stores such as Wal Mart, Best Buy, or an Amazon warehouse. How does this fit with your purported concern with overdevelopment? Do you support or oppose changing the Master Plan to accommodate the development of Big Box stores or other large retail space, such as the warehouse that is currently proposed for Washington Crossing-Pe. Rd?

BOB'S ANSWER: I did not support Big Box in answering a question about commercial development. My comment was that it was being considered for Scotch Road. The point I was making was that mixed retail with housing would be a better way to address the need for affordable housing.

As our township considers the balance between residential development and commercial income, it's essential to recognize the benefits of integrating retail with housing options, such as apartments, townhomes, condos, and affordable housing units. This approach not only enhances community livability but also generates ratables that can bolster our local economy. By creating vibrant mixed-use developments, we can attract businesses that contribute to our tax base while providing residents with convenient access to amenities and services.

A possible redevelopment of the Pennytown area could offer an opportunity to address these concerns. By fixing a package plan to include a well-designed combination of retail and residential spaces, we can foster a thriving community hub that supports both local businesses and housing needs. Ensuring that this development aligns with our township's goals will be crucial for long-term sustainability and growth.

I would like to collaborate with Hopewell Borough to expand their services. This could facilitate the growth of new housing developments throughout the area, decreasing concentration to the southern tier. By having a housing developer cover the costs associated with this expansion, we can alleviate concerns about infrastructure strain while promoting responsible development. This partnership can enhance our township's appeal and viability, ultimately leading to increased commercial investment and a stronger economic foundation.

QUESTION: Hopewell Valley News have stated that you did not respond to their questions concerning your platform. It is also very difficult to find out what your views are: There seems to be little that is publicly available. Why is this? Could you please outline what your views are, and why you believe that Hopewell should vote for you?

BOB'S ANSWER: I apologize to the community for any perceived lack of public communication. Regarding the Hopewell article, it was initially sent to the wrong email address. When I finally received it, I was out of town for work. Although I was granted a small extension, I couldn't meet the print deadline despite answering all questions.

I think it's important to highlight issues in Hopewell Township's media coverage. Many local outlets avoid reporting on election anomalies, even with an ongoing lawsuit against Mercer County for election interference in 2022. The Hopewell Express promised our last candidate an op-ed if there were further election problems in 2023, but when she tried to report issues, she received no response, showing a lack of interest in election integrity.

Concerns about election integrity persist in Hopewell Township, Mercer County, and likely across the U.S. In 2023, there were significant local issues: a polling location near Brandon Farms took nearly two hours to open, disenfranchising many voters who needed to leave for work before they could correct the issue. In Titusville, voters faced a two-hour delay after work due to a paper jam in that location's only voting tabulator. Many voters waited, tired, hungry, and ready to go home after a long day's work. I appreciate sources like MercerWe the People of HV for their commitment to transparent reporting on all issues in the valley, not just selective ones.

Finally, I want to express my unwavering commitment to election integrity, a treasure we hold dear in our democracy. Our farmlands are not just fields; they represent our roots and the promise of a sustainable future. I am dedicated to correcting past overdevelopment missteps and restoring transparency on the Hopewell Township Committee. Together, I believe we can strengthen the bonds between our boroughs, fostering a vibrant community where every voice matters. I'd like to look ahead with hope and determination, united in our mission to create a better tomorrow. Thank you for your time, consideration, and your vote.

Pedro Reyes Answers Questions Posed by Princeton Perspective

My response to the questions posed by the Princeton Perspective. I hope some if not all of my quotes makes it to your newsletter.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts and my team of Turner and Curcio with your readers. Here are my responses to your questions.

Why you? What would you bring to this role that would benefit Mercer County and why?

Why not me? The current commissioners have been in their roles long enough to allow severe financial mismanagement to take root, resulting in \$4.5 million in fines and interest levied by the state comptroller's office. This gross mismanagement has contributed to unnecessary property tax increases in the 2024 budget, further burdening our residents.

The county's financial troubles have been building for years, largely because there's been no one willing to challenge the status quo.

Commissioners are part-time employees enjoying full-time benefits that have cost the county over \$900,000. My team and I are committed to not taking any county benefits, including PTO, and in our first meeting, we will propose term limits, a freeze on commissioner salaries, and a 10% pay cut. We will work to eliminate unnecessary spending and return the budget to surplus.

You can find supporting details from various sources here:

- Rutgers CUPE Study on Full-Time Benefits for Part-Time Politicians- (<https://cupr.rutgers.edu/full-time-perks-for-part-time-work-for-these-politicians-taxpayers-footed-the-bill/>)
- Trentonian Article on Tax Increases
- New Jersey Globe on the Budget Address (<https://newjerseyglobe.com/local/read-mercercounty-executive-dan-bensons-budget-address/>)

There has not been a Republican in county government for many years.

What do you think a Republican can do better/differently for the county?

This isn't about what one party can do better. It's about putting politics aside and tackling the significant issues facing Mercer County.

When there is no balance in government, situations like our current financial crisis arise. We need to restore balance, and that means holding leadership accountable, whether they're Republican, Democrat, or Independent. Our focus is on fiscal responsibility, efficient spending, and eliminating the waste that have contributed to our financial problems. It's time to stop the waste and start solving the issues.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any other questions regarding the REYES-TURNER & CURCIO plan to rescue Mercer County.

Best regards,

Pedro Reyes - voteforpedroreyes@gmail.com - 732-447-4135

<https://njvoteforpedroreyes.com> - <https://www.facebook.com/MercerGO>

Will Catholics Pick the Next President?

By Kevin Mooney originally published in Restoration News (Oct 24 2024)

50 years of election analysis says "yes"—and that's great news for Trump

Catholic voters have strong track record when it comes to deciding the winner in presidential elections. In 2024, they appear poised to do so again in key states, where fresh polling shows they are **lining up solidly behind Donald Trump**.

How strong is that record? The single exception in the **past 50 years** was the 2000 election, when Catholics backed Al Gore over George W. Bush in a razor-thin election. That proved a one-off—4 years later, Bush won the Catholic vote over John Kerry, the Catholic Democratic Senator from Massachusetts.

While only about 20% of adults in the U.S. identify themselves as Catholic, they do form a decisive voting bloc in critical swing states like Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Georgia.

For generations, that proved a boon to the Democratic Party, which long dominated the Catholic vote; but recent polls show them **shifting heavily to the Republicans**. Pew Research data indicates slightly **more than half** of Catholic registered voters are now identifying with or leaning toward Republicans. The shift has been gradual but significant since the time of John F. Kennedy, another Democratic Senator from Massachusetts, who won an estimated 80% of the Catholic vote in 1960.

"Catholics have an almost undefeated record of picking the winner in presidential races," Steve Cortes, a pollster with the League of American Workers, told Restoration News in an interview. "They may be the only true swing voters left in the country and they happen to live in key states as far as the presidency is concerned.

"They are concentrated in all right places," Cortes added, "and that's a really good reason to be optimistic about Trump right now, because all the **credible polling shows him romping among Catholics**."

Cortes' latest battleground polling for the populist conservative site American Greatness show Trump leading Vice President Kamala Harris **20 points among Pennsylvania Catholics, 58%–38%**.

Overall, Cortes finds Trump leading Harris by 1 percentage point in Pennsylvania, 49%–48%. Steve Cortes

Cortes is also eyeballing Georgia where an American Greatness poll has Trump up 49%–48% in a head-to-head matchup with Harris. But as in Pennsylvania, Trump is pulling away from Harris among Georgia Catholics.

"Georgia is a lot more Catholic than people think because so many people have moved there," he said. "The Archdiocese of Atlanta has something like a million Catholics."

But Cortes does have a few caveats when it comes to the Catholic vote. He points out, for example, that has historically been subdivisions between church-attending and non-church-attending Catholics, as well as those Catholics who do not necessarily vote in line with official Church teachings.

"You have to be careful when you're talking about the Catholic vote, because you have to ask yourself if they are really voting as Catholics," Cortes said. "They might identify as Catholic, but that's not necessarily driving their vote. There is a lot of crossover between Catholics and what I call 'working class people.'"

Cortes defines "working class" broadly as people without college degrees who are motivated by a mix of economic and cultural factors. The fact that Trump lost ground in 2020 relative to his 2016 performance among working class voters, and by extension some Catholics, is one reason Cortes believes Trump lost that reelection bid.

In 2016, Trump won the Catholic vote by a decisive margin over Hillary Clinton; but in 2020 he was evenly split with the Catholic "Scranton Joe" Biden.

Flash forward to 2024 and Trump's race against the ultraliberal Kamala Harris, and polling from the National Catholic Reporter shows Trump building sizable leads over Harris among Catholics in several swing states not just in Pennsylvania, but also in Wisconsin where Trump is up against Harris by 18 percentage points among Catholics and in Michigan where Catholics prefer Trump by a 12 point margin.

The Urban vs. Suburban Catholic Divide

Steve Wagner, a volunteer with Catholic Vote, a nonprofit group that advocates on behalf of Catholic teachings, expects Trump to win the Catholic vote. But he also sees some new trendlines that give cause for concern.

Instead of the traditional split between Catholics who attend mass and those who don't, Wagner sees a wedge between urban and suburban Catholics.

"What we're seeing now is very little difference between religiously active and inactive Catholic voters," he said. "What we are seeing is the emergence of urban Catholics, even mass-attending urban Catholics, defying the trend toward more conservative, Republican, and pro-life habits of voting.

"This is an interesting trend that has not been adequately probed," Wagner added. "I think we need to update our thesis since we can no longer talk about mass-attending Catholics as a distinct constituency. Now we need to parse out urban and non-urban mass attending Catholics [because] urban Catholics are not less likely to attend mass than suburban Catholics."

Wagner finds that **urban Catholics are more likely to vote for Democrats** regardless of whether they regularly attend mass or not. That complicates things for the GOP.

"What this means in the current election cycle, is there is not as much of a difference between religiously active Catholic voters, and religiously inactive Catholic voters," Wagner said. "What this means is that the likelihood of mass-attending Catholics voting for Trump is not as it might have been in a previous time because of the emergence of urban Catholics."

Globalism or the American Way?

Still, Catholic Vote president Brian Burch believes Trump's appeal among working class Catholic voters goes far beyond economics. "It's not just about the pocketbook per se, although that's certainly a motive. There's a desire for meaningful jobs in small towns that have been hollowed out by the global economy," Burch explained.

"But there's also the question of **living a meaningful life** in a society where your work and your family inside of your community is **represented and substantiated**."

Burch sees the objective of the radical Left guiding the Democratic Party as "eviscerating" essential institutions like the family and the church, which provide people with meaning. Brian Burch

"There's a reason why people are anxious, lonely, taking antidepressants and committing suicide at higher rates," Burch laments. "Our politicians have contributed to this epidemic of loneliness."

"When you're being told that getting married and having children is the worst thing you can do, and that you're just a cog in the wheel of a corporation based overseas, and that you're there to serve the elites and a globalist empire, that's a problem."

No presidential nominee in U.S. history better exemplifies that cynical secularism than San Francisco's Kamala Harris, who's snubbed Catholic voters on the 2024 campaign trail.

Harris's decision earlier this week to skip out on the annual Al Smith Foundation dinner—which raises funds for Catholic charities each year—in New York City fits into a larger pattern, Burch suggests, that isn't lost on Catholic voters.

"Increasingly, the Left is very open about the way it views the Catholic Church. It is the one institution that stands in the way of their larger ideological goals, which is to destroy the social fabric based upon traditional moral beliefs," Burch explained.

Where Harris is concerned, Wagner finds there is no room for pretending. If elected, he anticipates that Harris would move against Catholic institutions and work to block Catholics from public service.

"She really believes there should be no kids outside of a public school, and she would close Catholic schools if she could," Wagner said. "Harris also does not believe in the right of conscience for health care providers. She would force Catholic doctors and nurses to perform abortions, and genital mutilations and anything else she is keen on."

Wagner also said Catholics should be mindful of the fact while serving as a U.S. Senator, Harris worked to block a judicial nominee to the federal bench because he belonged to the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic organization.

While Catholics who support Trump should be encouraged by the latest polling, Steve Cortes warns that the so-called "nones"—younger voters who identify as atheist, agnostic, or irreligious—are lining up against Trump.

"The nones used to be a small group," but not now Cortes said. "They are growing and it's one reason Trump is losing among young people. The numbers there are foreboding."

But in this current election cycle, Burch points to the overt animosity that Harris and other leftist politicians have shown toward Catholics as critical for driving the Catholic vote toward Trump in key states. Burch is convinced that whatever truce may have existed at one time between Catholics and leftists who object to Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular is now over.

"I think Christian people, regardless of what Church they attend, know they are at risk because the Left isn't content with the idea of different strokes for different folks, and all of us living together," Burch said. "Instead, they're interested in destroying us and our way of life."

If Trump can convince enough Catholics, and working class voters, that he cares about them and identifies with their concerns, Burch anticipates that the former Republican president will become the next Republican president.

Kevin Mooney is a Senior Investigative Researcher for Restoration News.

The article link: <https://restoration-news.com/will-catholics-pick-the-next-president>

PILOTs and School Referendum

We Need a New Approach, Not the Same Old Tired Rhetoric

By Dufresne

In the October 2024 issue of the Hopewell Express, the Democratic candidate for the Hopewell Township Committee, Uma Purandare, was asked:

The Hopewell Parc PILOT payment plan has been a hot button issue for many voters. How do you feel the issue has been handled? What do you think would be the best way to resolve it?

Permit me to comment, sentence by sentence, upon her response:

Uma Purandare: "Hopewell Township has negotiated PILOT agreements to meet our affordable housing requirement."

Dufresne: This is misleading at best. PILOTs are optional and most municipalities meet their affordable housing obligations without also agreeing to PILOTs. PILOTs are tax breaks for the developers of these developments. The developers are usually

conglomerates who do not need the tax breaks, they naturally seek them. Hopewell Township acquiesced in order to provide an additional enticement, but these agreements were not necessary as part of our affordable housing obligations. This issue is a hot button issue because the amounts involved are staggering, well more than \$200 million over the 30 year life of the PILOTs.

Uma Purandare: "Without these agreements, we would have used taxpayers' dollars to build affordable housing, which would have cost \$150 to \$200 million, or faced a builder's remedy lawsuit that would have required building ten houses for every affordable unit, totaling over 6500 homes."

Dufresne: This is so misleading and disingenuous that it really is a bunch of lies strung together. Without these agreements, the developers would have simply obtained 3% less profit from the building of the new affordable units and market rate homes. The alternative was not building the units ourselves, although some 100% affordable complexes have been built in the past in the township. No builder's remedy would have happened in the absence of a PILOT. The truth is that the Township was content with the PILOT agreements (there were four of them under this administration) because the PILOTs, which were designed under state law to encourage development in disadvantaged communities, change the distribution of tax dollars so that 95% of the new tax revenue goes to the municipal coffers rather than the usual distribution that includes the School and Fire Districts. The reality is that the Township negotiated these agreements with their own budget in mind, not the totality of the impact on the School District and the Valley. Our municipal share of taxes may be reduced, while our School taxes will now soar.

Uma Purandare: "I fully support affordable housing and look forward to welcoming our new neighbors, just as my family was welcomed."

Dufresne: We all support the need for affordable housing, but that has nothing to do with the PILOTs, which were optional and unnecessary. The Township so often casts opponents of PILOTs as opponents of affordable housing. That's the kind of argumentation that gets used when their argumentation is so weak and deceptive.

Uma Purandare: "I am committed to using PILOT funds to offset a substantial portion of the costs of improvement at Bear Tavern Elementary School."

Dufresne: Ms. Purandare conveniently fails to mention how the Township Committee continually predicted that there would be no impact on the local schools. The only reasonable path forward is for the Township Committee, upon receipt of PILOT monies, to forward the normal School District share, approximately 55%, to the Schools, and the Fire District's share to them, not just limited amounts for some Bear Tavern improvements.

Uma Purandare: "The PILOT agreements with Lennar explicitly outlines the use of these funds to support the school district and the new senior and community center."

Dufresne: Ms. Purandare here and throughout had parroted the words used by the rest of the Hopewell Township Committee. In these responses, she offers no independent approach or new proposal. The reality, as all who have run for office will tell you, is that Ms. Purandare may have submitted these answers, but she almost certainly did not write these answers herself. They too closely parrot the party line. We need representatives who will challenge the status quo, especially as we move towards the next round of affordable housing planning, whose numbers have just been released.

Education

HVRSD Board of Education Meeting October 14, 2024

Recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWTcE-_rjCE

The next BOE meeting will be on November 18, 2024, at 6:30pm at the board office 425 South Main St. Pennington.

October 14 2024 meeting summary to be provided in next newsletter.

The Importance of the Review and Revision of HVRSD Policy 5756: Transgender and Nonconforming Students

By Sylvia Kocses

In October of this year, Reem Alsalem, United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur, presented a report titled "Violence Against Women and Girls in Sports" to the UN General Assembly. In her report she stated that:

"From a study conducted in August 2024, over 600 female athletes in more than 400 women's division events across 29 different sports were defeated by transgender-identifying men. Male athletes have taken over 890 medals from female athletes."

Riley Gaines, who swam in the NCAA Championships in 2022 against trans female Lia Thomas (male-to-female (MtF)), has also expressed concerns. "An increasing number of female athletes are losing access to equal opportunities, the right intended to provide for women and girls to showcase their abilities and strengths within their own uniqueness" to men who self-identify as women.

NBC News reported on October 25, 2024 that so far this season five women's volleyball teams have canceled games against the San Jose State Women's Volleyball team. At issue is the participation of transgender women (MtF) in women's sports. University of Nevada, Reno players said they "refuse to participate in any match that advances injustice against female athletes". A 2023 Gallup survey found that 69% of Americans say trans athletes should be allowed to compete only on teams that conform with their biological sex, up from 61% in 2021.

Why does this matter? In October, the HVRSD Board of Education announced that they would be reviewing and possibly revising **Policy 5756: Transgender and Nonconforming Students** (see below) which was originally written and adopted in June 2016. When the policy committee revises or changes a policy they present the policy at a regular monthly meeting of the full board for a first reading. Board members may ask questions and community members have two opportunities to speak for three minutes each during Public Comment. The following month the policy is presented for a second public reading, questions, community comments and then the BOE votes to adopt or reject the policy.

Policy 5756 was written to codify the commitment of the district to provide "a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for all students, including transgender students.... with the goal to ensure their safety, comfort and healthy development. Being a good ally to trans students, however, shouldn't require sex-blindness, erase biology, result in the loss of scholarships and championships, or elevate inclusion over fairness and meritocracy in competitive sports.

This policy addresses many sensitive and contentious issues. It needs to be revised and re-written so that it reflects respect, compassion, fairness, equity, parental rights, women's rights and biological/scientific accuracy. For example, there are definitions in this policy that are problematic (sex-assigned at birth, gender identity) and definitions of critical terms that are missing (sex, male, female). The revised policy should refrain from vocabulary, concepts and ideology that represents the view that males and females are the same and interchangeable, that categories like male/female or man/woman are oppressive and artificially created or that objective reality is non-existent.

The policy also addresses the issue of transgender women (MtF) in women's sports. It currently states:

"Transgender students shall be permitted to participate in... competitive athletic activities in a manner consistent with their gender identity and that the responsibility for determining a student's gender identity rest with the student."

Dorianne Lambert Coleman in her book, **On Sex and Gender**, provides this common sense perspective and advice:

"Sports is about organized physical activity. Sometimes, but not always, a piece of this is competition. Early on, sports is co-ed because competition isn't the main point. Girls and boys are usually separated around the start of puberty... the developmental period when we mature sexually and the PERFORMANCE GAP explodes. That gap -between girls and boys as a group- goes from about 5% prepuberty to between 10% and 30 % post-puberty, depending on the sport and event. Where the predominant theme (in sports) is that "everyone can play", it's community-building and kind to be inclusive. The harder call is whether males who have experienced puberty should be allowed to play on girl's teams that are more competitive.

Evolutionary biologist Carole Hooven speaks about the male advantage over females in sports in her book: **The Story of Testosterone, the Hormone that Dominates and Divides Us**.

"Masses of evidence from endocrinology show that heightened exposure to testosterone at different times (in the womb, shortly after birth, during puberty) give males a physical advantage in sports over females. Once a male goes through puberty, he experiences changes in bone mineral density, height, muscle mass, limb length, hand span, and hemoglobin. All of these changes translate to natural advantages over females in speed, strength and power. A male level of testosterone in puberty and adulthood is the master key for superior performance in most sports."

Policy 5756 needs to be reviewed and revised to provide more nuanced guidelines concerning trans females (MtF) participation in competitive women's sports. Should a male-bodied student be the women's state champion? Maybe invitationals, events with knockout rounds, and postseason play should be restricted by sex because now the institutional focus is on competition?

Title IX is the federal civil rights law signed by President Nixon in 1972. It contains only 37 words.

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or ACTIVITY receiving federal financial assistance."

Thanks to the word "activity", Title IX created access and equality in sports participation for girls and women. Are these hard-won rights that women have fought for being erased?

Lisa Wolff recently wrote in the Hopewell Express (November 2024) that "the school board needs to engage with the community... incorporate the input of their constituents... find common agreement... be proactive and inclusive... reach all segments of the community".

That is good advice. Opportunities for discussions regarding this policy should be planned and open to public input. They should occur before the first public reading to ensure that diverse perspectives and viewpoints are examined. Our school administrators and school board should be committed to the concept of inquiry and debate based on factual evidence. Otherwise, the only other option is to attend the Board of Education meeting in person to engage with our administrators and elected officials during Public Comment that is restricted to three minutes and does not permit interactive dialogue.

HVRSD Policies (5756): <https://go.boarddocs.com/nj/hvrsd/Board.nsf/Public?open&id=policies> (Under "5000 Series: Pupils"; "5756 Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students")

Pdf version: <https://mercervethepeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/5756-Transgender-NonConforming-Students-2016-06-20.pdf>

Radicals are trying to redefine 'woman.' It's why America needs a Women's Bill of Rights | Opinion

By Rep. Diana Harshbarger and Riley Gaines, published May 17, 2023 in Fox News

What is a woman? And what does it matter? It is becoming increasingly difficult to talk about women's rights, or even basic biological reality, in a common language.

While most Americans understand that a "woman" is an adult human female, radical gender ideologues want to redefine womanhood as a subjective state unrelated to biological sex. This redefinition of once-assumed basic facts has serious consequences for equal opportunity, privacy, safety and freedom of expression.

Right now, females are losing athletic, employment and educational opportunities to biological males. Biological males are gaining access to sororities, domestic violence shelters, locker rooms, women's prisons, and rape crisis centers. And the women and girls who object to these practices are being threatened, coerced and shamed into silence and submission.

...

People who speak the truth about male and female sex differences are being punished and canceled. And accurate data collection regarding public health, crime, education and the economic status of women is being compromised by the misuse of basic sex-based terminology.

To address these and the myriad of potential future consequences of the redefinition of sex, we are working to advance the **Women's Bill of Rights (WBOR, see below link)**. This legislation can provide legal and linguistic clarity by addressing the meaning of laws that prohibit sex discrimination and helping to preserve single-sex spaces that are important for privacy, safety or equal opportunity.

Importantly, the Women's Bill of Rights does not create or establish new legal rights for women. It simply preserves women as a legal category and makes it clear that terms like "women" and "men" must accord with biological sex, not gender identity. And it codifies current case law, which forbids unfair discrimination but allows the law to recognize sex when relevant.

...

Opponents of the Women's Bill of Rights have misleadingly labeled the bill "anti-transgender." While this label may make it easier for some people to dismiss the legislation out of hand, it's not accurate or honest.

The WBOR does nothing to curb the rights of people who identify as transgender, nor does it bar states or the federal government from addressing the question of identification in other ways. It simply makes the law recognize the biological and very real differences between the sexes, and protects the rights women have been enjoying in America for decades.

We strongly believe that every person, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity should be treated with equal dignity and respect, and should have access to the greatest level of opportunity that our country has to offer. However, any intellectually honest person must grant that eroding the definition of "women" will work against this goal and the hard-won progress that we've made when it comes to women's rights.

Women in the United States today have had the greatest level of freedom, wealth and success of any generation of women in the history of the world. This is in part because America's laws offer women equal protection (under the 14th Amendment), and prohibit baseless discrimination in employment, education, wages and other areas.

...

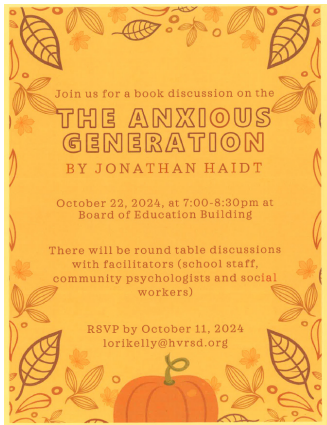
The WBOR will help us navigate into a future where all people have the highest degree of freedom. We cannot sacrifice women's rights or sideline their interests amid social changes that promote greater inclusivity or gender equality, however well-intentioned. We cannot – and need not – push some Americans back to move others forward. Women cannot be pushed back. We won't let it happen. Join us in supporting the Women's Bill of Rights.

Women's Bill of Rights (WBOR): <https://womensbillofrights.com/>

Source for newsletter: <https://harshbarger.house.gov/media/in-the-news/radicals-are-trying-redefine-woman-its-why-america-needs-womens-bill-rights>

Delay the Smartphone: Wait Until 8th Campaign

By Sylvia Kocses



HVRSD hosted a roundtable discussion about the book **“The Anxious Generation” (by Jonathan Haidt)** on **October 22nd**. This book explores how the increase of “phone-based” vs “play-based” interactions is causing an epidemic of childhood mental illness.

Can parents and schools reverse the power of peer pressure that may be a cause for the increase in depression, anxiety, distraction, addiction, social and relational impairment that affect pre-teens and high school age students today? The Hopewell Valley School District believes we can.

Tuesday evening, October 22, 2024, the District hosted a community event, facilitated by Paulette DiNardo, Director of Pupil Services focused on author Jonathan Haidt's recent book **The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness**. (reviewed by Mercer We the People of HV, see below). Over 50 parents, school counselors and local psychologists met for a 90 minute interactive, non-political, open- to- diverse viewpoints discussion about Haidt's book.

In Haidt's' earlier book, **The Coddling of the American Mind** (2018) he suggested that the cultivation of fragility, victimhood and safetyism is fueling the collapse of youth mental health. Parents and educators are leading kids astray by perpetuating **three Great Untruths**:

- **UNTRUTH #1: What doesn't kill you makes you weaker:** Parents and schools are too worried about inflicting any sort of “trauma” on kids so trigger warnings and helicopter parenting are byproducts of this desire to shield kids from any potential source of harm. But research shows that children are remarkably resilient to adverse events if we allow them to experience unpleasantness, conflicts, and disappointment because it develops social and psychological strength.
- **UNTRUTH #2: Always Trust Your Feelings:** Students are encouraged to follow their feelings without question instead of teaching them to examine their first impressions about an event, look for facts and evidence and improve the way they interpret the world.
- **UNTRUTH #3: Life is a Battle Between Good People and Bad People:** This untruth feeds on humanity's ingrained susceptibility to tribalism. When educators and students distill people down to their various identities and that their actions and views are determined by those identities it creates an “us versus them” environment instead of an inclusive, pro-human diverse society.

In **Anxious Generation** Haidt's' focus is on Great Untruth #1. He proposes that the Great Rewiring of Childhood has two plotlines. First, is the changes in technology that shape children's days and minds in **the virtual world**. Second is the well-intentioned but disastrous shift toward overprotecting children and restricting their autonomy **in the real world**. He describes this as a transition from a “play-based childhood” (ages 0-12) to a “phone-based childhood” including all the internet-connected personal electronics that came to fill young people's time and especially the smartphone with its millions of apps.

Haidt offers many ideas and reforms that aim to reverse these two big mistakes: give children vast amounts of direct experience in the real world through unsupervised play and childhood independence and protect them more in the online world where they are particularly vulnerable especially during puberty.

The discussion that Tuesday evening focused on the four reforms that Haidt believes could provide a foundation for healthier childhood in the digital age.

1. **No smartphones before high school** (before 9th grade or about age 14).
2. **No social media before 16** (to eliminate social comparison and algorithmically chosen influencers).
3. **Phone-free schools from K-12** (Devices are in phone lockers/locked pouches during the school day).
4. **Far more unsupervised play and childhood independence.**

While most of those attending the discussion agreed with the 4 reforms Haidt suggests many felt helpless to counteract this social dilemma trap. Children so desperately want to “fit-in” with their peers and because “everyone else has a smartphone” parents tend to give in to the pressure. Haidt suggests parents and schools use a collective action response.

“Each of us, acting alone, perceives it is too difficult or costly to do the right thing. But if we can act together, the costs (socially or economically) go way down.”

Through collective action and voluntary coordination parents and schools can support each other when they act together. One suggestion presented to the group that night was the organization **WAIT UNTIL 8TH** (<https://www.waituntil8th.org/>). Parents sign a pledge when their child is in elementary school that they will not give them a smartphone until eighth grade. The pledge becomes binding only when 10 families with children in that school and grade sign the pledge. This guarantees that those children will have others to play with and will not feel that they are the “only ones” excluded. Information about this organization is included in this edition of Mercer We the People of HV.

The second suggestion was to implement phone-free schools at least until high school in our district. More information on this policy will be available through the school administration in the near future.

Attendees at the discussion applauded this effort by the administration to engage with all members of the community regarding this critical issue and to allow people to freely express their ideas and concerns. Collective social dilemmas can be solved by collective constructive dialogue and finding common ground. Please have more of these events with the same round-table format about other issues that face our district and impact our children.

This book was reviewed by Mercer We the People of HV in July 2024, to read more about the book, please click here and see page 12.

<https://mercerwethepeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/0724-MercerWe.pdf>

Election Integrity

Summary of the Mercer County Election Case: Complaint, Defendants' Motion to Dismiss, Court's Ruling, and Defendants' Answer

By Mark Demo

Overview of the Case:

The lawsuit brought by Bethany Murranko, Mark Murranko, and others (collectively, the plaintiffs) against the Mercer County Board of Elections and individual board members, as well as the Superintendent of Elections, arose from claims of mismanagement during the 2022 and 2023 general elections. The plaintiffs alleged a series of failures by the election officials, which they argued led to voter disenfranchisement, violations of both state and federal election laws, and infringements on their civil rights.

The lawsuit focuses on equipment malfunctions, improper use of provisional ballots, and alleged failures by poll workers and election officials, all of which the plaintiffs claim undermined the integrity of the elections and violated their constitutional rights.

The Complaint:

The plaintiffs filed a complaint on February 14, 2024, containing three primary counts:

- State Civil Rights Violations (Count 1):** The plaintiffs allege violations of the New Jersey Civil Rights Act (NJCRRA) (N.J.S.A. 10:6-2) and assert that their constitutional right to vote, as protected by the New Jersey Constitution, was infringed upon. They claim that due to the mismanagement of the election, their votes were either improperly rejected or their voting process was compromised, resulting in a violation of their right to have their votes counted properly.
- Federal Civil Rights Violations (Count 2):** The plaintiffs further claim that the defendants violated federal civil rights law under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Specifically, they argue that the election officials' actions or inactions deprived them of equal protection under the law, and that qualified voters were not treated equally, as many were forced to vote provisionally, and some votes were not counted at all. They contend that the improper handling of ballots and voting equipment effectively diluted their votes.
- Declaratory Judgment (Count 3):** The plaintiffs also seek a declaratory judgment asserting that Mercer County's handling of the election violated New Jersey's Title 19 election laws. They allege that procedures regarding provisional ballots, chain of custody, and ballot counting were not followed, which compromised the integrity of the elections.

The plaintiffs claim that Dominion Voting Systems tabulators rejected ballots due to mismatched ballot ID codes, resulting in confusion and County officials' misapplication of provisional ballot handling procedures when emergency ballots should have been used. They argue that poll workers were inadequately trained, which exacerbated the problems on election day. Furthermore, they allege that the Board of Elections failed to maintain the chain of custody for ballots and that discrepancies in reported vote counts were not addressed before certifying the election results.

The plaintiffs seek both injunctive relief to prevent future election issues and damages for the alleged civil rights violations that occurred during the 2022 and 2023 elections.

Defendants' Motion to Dismiss:

Before filing a formal answer to the complaint, the defendants, led by the Mercer County Board of Elections, moved to dismiss the case on June 17, 2024. In their motion, the defendants made several arguments:

- Sovereign Immunity:** The defendants argued that they, as election officials and arms of the state, were immune from lawsuits under both the NJCRA and 42 U.S.C. § 1983. They contended that election oversight is a state function, and

therefore, they should not be subject to civil liability for their actions in this role unless the state has explicitly waived sovereign immunity, which it had not.

2. **Qualified Immunity:** The defendants also claimed they were protected by qualified immunity, which shields government officials from personal liability as long as their actions do not violate “clearly established” statutory or constitutional rights. They maintained that the alleged issues with the election were unforeseen and that they acted reasonably in response to the technical difficulties with voting equipment.
3. **Timeliness of the Complaint:** The defendants contended that the plaintiffs’ lawsuit was time-barred under New Jersey election law (N.J.S.A. 19:29-1 to -14), which requires election-related challenges to be filed within 32 days after an election. Since the plaintiffs filed their lawsuit in February 2024—more than a year after the November 2022 election—the defendants argued that the complaint should be dismissed as untimely.

The defendants requested that the court dismiss the entire case with prejudice, meaning the plaintiffs would not be allowed to refile the complaint on the same grounds.

Court’s Ruling on the Motion to Dismiss:

On August 29, 2024, the Superior Court of New Jersey issued its decision on the defendants’ motion to dismiss. The court’s ruling addressed the key issues as follows:

1. **Sovereign Immunity:** The court ruled that the Mercer County Board of Elections, as an entity performing state functions, was entitled to sovereign immunity from damages claims. As a result, the claims for monetary damages against the Board and the individual defendants in their official capacities were dismissed. However, the court allowed the plaintiffs to seek prospective injunctive relief—that is, they could pursue changes to future election processes, but they could not recover damages from the Board.
2. **Qualified Immunity for Individual Defendants:** The court allowed the claims for personal liability to proceed against the individual defendants in their personal capacities. This means that although the defendants could later assert qualified immunity as a defense, the plaintiffs were permitted to move forward with their claims that the individual defendants personally violated their civil rights during the election process.
3. **Timeliness:** The court rejected the defendants’ argument regarding the timeliness of the lawsuit. It found that the plaintiffs were not directly contesting the election results but were instead alleging civil rights violations related to how the election was conducted. Therefore, the 32-day deadline for election challenges did not apply, and the case could proceed.

Amendment of the Complaint: The court granted the plaintiffs 20 days to amend their complaint, allowing them to clarify or strengthen their claims in light of the court’s ruling.

Defendants’ Answer to the Complaint:

Following the court’s decision on the motion to dismiss, the defendants filed a formal answer to the complaint. In their answer, they generally denied the plaintiffs’ allegations of election mishandling. They maintained that the election was conducted according to the law and that any issues encountered, such as the tabulator malfunctions, were addressed promptly and appropriately.

The defendants continued to assert several defenses, including:

1. **Sovereign and Qualified Immunity:** Reiterating their arguments from the motion to dismiss, the defendants claimed they were immune from liability for their actions as public officials performing state-mandated functions.
2. **Lack of Standing:** The defendants argued that the plaintiffs lacked standing to bring the lawsuit because they had not demonstrated any specific harm or personal injury resulting from the alleged election irregularities.
3. **Good Faith and Compliance:** The defendants argued that they acted in good faith and in compliance with all relevant laws and procedures, and that any errors or technical issues that arose were promptly addressed without impacting the outcome of the election.

The defendants requested that the court dismiss the case in its entirety, maintaining their position that they did not violate any laws or rights during the election process.

Next Steps in the Case:

With the court having ruled on the motion to dismiss, the case is now proceeding to the discovery phase, during which both parties will gather evidence to support their claims. This phase will include:

1. **Depositions:** The plaintiffs and defendants will have the opportunity to take depositions from key witnesses, including election officials and potentially poll workers, to investigate the claims of election mismanagement and civil rights violations. These depositions are crucial for establishing the facts and clarifying the roles of the individual defendants in the election process.

2. **Document Production:** Both parties will exchange documents related to the administration of the 2022 and 2023 elections, including records of ballot handling, equipment testing, and communications among election officials.
3. **Expert Testimony:** The plaintiffs may introduce expert testimony regarding election procedures, equipment functionality, and the impact of the alleged irregularities on the election outcome.

As the case moves forward, the court will consider the facts gathered during discovery and may eventually hold a trial to determine whether the plaintiffs' claims of civil rights violations and election mismanagement hold merit. The individual defendants may continue to argue that they are protected by qualified immunity, but this will be decided based on the specific facts of their actions during the election.

Lawsuit: New Jersey Election Officials Broke the Law, Disenfranchised Hundreds of Voters with Missing Ballots in 2022

By Kevin Mooney originally published in Restoration News (Oct 17, 2024)

County voters see opportunities for tampering and fraud where ballot "chain of custody" is compromised

When two officials from the New Jersey's Attorney General's Office visited David Fried just after the 2022 elections, he was initially pleased.

"I thought they were coming to investigate what happened on Election Day," he said. "The ballots from an entire district in my township went missing. So, I put this information out on my Facebook page since I had a responsibility to let the public know what was going on. There were problems all over the county and we had serious questions about the chain of custody for the missing ballots."

The county in question was Mercer County, which includes the state capital of Trenton, and the township was Robbinsville, where Fried has served as mayor since 2001. After receiving reports that ballots had gone missing, Fried took to Facebook to inform his constituents about the missing ballots and the technical glitches that prevented hundreds of voters from their votes counting.

"There were problems everywhere on Election Day in 2022," Fried recalled. You'll see photographs of ballots strewn all over floors, I also know there were ballots left in machines in Princeton. We also received reports from different parts of the county about bags containing ballots that had been opened, which raises at least the possibility of tampering, and in our town, ballots went missing entirely in District 5."

The two officials representing State Attorney General Matthew Platkin came to visit Fried at the Robbinsville Township Municipal Building on the Thursday morning after the 2022 election. That's where they questioned the mayor about his Facebook postings.

"I was extremely excited to meet these folks because I thought they were there to investigate what happened," Fried said. "But they were sent from the AGs office not to investigate the fact that our ballots went missing, but to ask why I put out a Facebook posting saying that this had happened. I explained to them that it's called transparency, and that the people had a right to know. They took my statement and left and to this day I'm shocked no one from AGs office cared that the ballots went missing, they only thing they cared about was the fact that I put this information on Facebook. I never heard from them again."

But Fried and other county residents have made certain the four individuals sitting on the Mercer County Board of Elections, along with the superintendent of elections, continue to hear from them. As it turns out, the missing ballots in Robbinsville fit into a larger pattern of irregularities and alleged civil rights violations that revolve around the county's response to tabulator machines' malfunction on the morning of Election Day 2022.

In February 2024, ten Mercer County residents filed a lawsuit against the board members and the superintendent alleging hundreds of voters were disenfranchised because election officials did not follow the law and failed to properly execute their responsibilities. The suit details how the tabulating machines, manufactured by the election technology company Dominion Voting System, were unable to function "because Dominion failed to update the numbering of ballots after a change was requested by the Mercer County clerk, so the tabulators did not recognize the ballots as legitimate." For its part, Dominion has a page devoted to "Setting the Record Straight."

After investigating, the Mercer County prosecutor's office determined there was no criminal activity and that the problem stemmed from a "miscommunication" between Dominion and Royal Printing Service, the company which prints the ballot. The problem, from a legal point of view, is what happened next after the machines malfunctioned.

"The failure of the tabulating machines only affected the manner in which the paper ballots would be collected and tabulated," the suit claims. "It should not have affected any qualified voters' ability to cast a regular ballot."

The experience Jeremy Whaley had the morning of the election was repeated many times over. He was checked in and "was indisputably qualified to vote," according to suit, but the board required him to vote by provisional ballot since the machines

were not working. That following December he received a letter from the county informing him that his ballot was rejected because he had “voted by machine,” when in reality, he had not. Hundreds of other legitimate voters who were also told to cast provisional ballots received the same letter.

A provisional ballot is used when a voter’s eligibility is in question or cannot be verified on Election Day. But there was no question about the eligibility of Whaley, his fellow plaintiffs, and other county residents that day.

“Everything on Election Day was done either incorrectly or without care,” said Whaley, who is also the chairman of the Ewing Township Republican Party. “Almost everyone who voted that morning on Election Day had to vote by provisional ballot and then when you add the missing ballots on top of what happened with machines, and the missing bags, it begins to raise questions about the possibility of tampering. Everyone on the board, and everyone who had responsibility for that election, needs to be replaced. We need fresh faces.”

In addition to the two Democratic and two Republican board members, the suit also names Nathaniel Walker, then the elections superintendent in 2022, and Walker Worthy, the incumbent superintendent, as defendants. Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello was initially named as a defendant, but her name was dropped during an August court proceeding.

Restoration News reached out to the current defendants for comment, but they did not respond.

Chain of Custody

The suit’s allegations are largely built around New Jersey’s Title 19 procedures, which are designed to maintain election integrity while ensuring the proper chain of custody of ballots. The plaintiffs claim the board and the superintendent did not have the necessary protocols in place when the tabulation machines did not work and also failed to train county workers and district board members who did not know how to handle paper ballots in manner that is in line with maintaining the chain of custody. Consequently, the plaintiffs argue, district board workers, based on instructions from County Election Officials, incorrectly informed those voters who showed from approximately 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. the morning of the election to vote provisionally when they should have been voting by regular paper ballot.

The suit gathered additional momentum in August when the Superior Court of New Jersey rejected a motion from the defendants to dismiss the case.

“It was the job of the county, to be able to conduct the election even if the technology fails,” said Dana Wefer, the attorney representing the Mercer County voters. “That’s what this lawsuit is all about.”

The suit estimates that at least 759 voters in Mercer County were disenfranchised because the board and the superintendent informed them they’d already voted by machine—even though officials knew full well that it was impossible that those individuals could’ve voted by machine.

“Election integrity is really important and it’s important that the people who run our elections follow the law and know what to do in the event of a technological failure, or if anything else unforeseen happens,” said Wefer, who is also a former Republican candidate for U.S. Senate in New Jersey. “Getting accountability in this case will hopefully set a precedent that says all counties in the state need to be prepared for events like this.”

Mercer election officials eventually did switch to paper ballots after the morning mayhem. But further difficulties ensued because “there were no protocols for the proper handling of the paper ballots and because the District Board workers were not trained on how to handle paper ballots, chain of custody was not preserved on many, perhaps most, ballots in Mercer County for the 2022 election cycle,” according to the suit.

This is where the problems Fried experienced in Robbinsville come into play. “Entire bags of votes were misplaced, bags and machines containing ballots were not properly sealed, and at least 1500 ballots were found left behind in tabulators six days after the election,” the suit says. “The final numbers for the election are unknown and unknowable.”

What should have happened instead?

The board simply should have had early morning voters fill out paper ballots and then have those paper ballots inserted into the tabulators, Wefer explained. That’s because ballots can be manually inserted into the tabulator through an emergency box and/or by removing the top part of the machine. For this reason, the failure of tabulators to scan did not alter where the ballots were deposited.

“The next big issue arose because what should have happened is those paper ballots should have been counted at the district board polling places by district board members in accordance with Title 19,” Wefer said. “But they didn’t do that and instead they transported all the ballots to the county [office in Trenton] to be tabulated and there were no protocols in place to keep the chain of custody on those ballots.”

Although the case does not explicitly involve voter fraud, Whaley, the Ewing GOP chair, points to the mishandling of ballots by poorly trained officials as a prime example of how points of vulnerability can emerge making it possible for fraud to occur.

“We need to clean house and get the right people into these positions,” he said. “We need to make the necessary changes to the laws and make sure election integrity is the mainstay and focus.”

One Man, Three Votes?

There are good reasons for that.

A nonpartisan watchdog group called Fight Voter Fraud has compiled public records since it was founded in 2018 highlighting where people are “double-registered” or have “double-voted” in particular areas. A key part of this process involves cross-checking “National Change of Address” data with voter rolls.

In Mercer County, Fight Voter Fraud found two people who were double-registered: One individual simultaneously registered in a Ewing apartment on Parkside Ave., as well as in Ohio and New York; and another individual simultaneously registered in Hamilton, New Jersey, and Chicago and New York.

Statewide, the figures are much more unsettling.

Fight Voter Fraud data shows there are 94 New Jersey voters who are “double-registered”—meaning they are registered in Jersey and in another state. The data also shows that 94 Jersey residents “double-voted” meaning they voted in both places where they were registered.

The Heritage Foundation, a Washington D.C.-based think tank, has a detailed database on the instances of voter fraud in New Jersey dating back to 2003 that includes several criminal convictions. The database is part of a larger project documenting voter fraud cases.

New Jersey has not voted for a Republican in a presidential race since George H.W. Bush won the state in 1988. Democrats continue to hold a significant party registration advantage. Critically, however, the number of unaffiliated voters is roughly even to the number of registered Democrats, making Republican candidates for governor and U.S. Senate surprisingly competitive when those unaffiliated voters break their way.

In the 2021 governor’s race, for instance, Republican Jack Ciattarelli, a former assemblyman and businessman, nearly upset Gov. Phil Murphy, the incumbent Democrat. Ciattarelli has announced he will run for governor again next year.

In a close race, a couple of hundred voters like those identified in the Mercer County suit could make a difference. The presidential race was shown to be in single digits when President Biden was the candidate. Donald Trump, the Republican, is trailing Vice President Kamala Harris by 12 points, according to recent polls. But New Jersey does have a long history of breaking late. Closing the gap in Jersey to single digits could help with the popular vote nationwide.

Back in Robbinsville, Mayor Fried continues to be unimpressed with the performance of his county’s Board of Elections. He describes what it was like to attend their first meeting after the 2022 elections.

“I went because all my phone calls went unanswered,” he said. “I sat there with a group of people, and we all asked questions and none of those questions were answered. I don’t even know why they have meetings since they can’t give us any explanations. That was the only meeting I ever went to where the American flag was dangling from the wall by a paperclip.

“That says it all.”

Kevin Mooney is a Senior Investigative Researcher for Restoration News.

The article link: <https://restoration-news.com/lawsuit-new-jersey-election-officials-broke-the-law,-disenfranchised>

Fernando Uribe Interviews Lynne Lippincott and Mark Demo of Citizens for NJ Election Integrity (C4NJEI)

October 21, 2024

Fernando Uribe, host of Real Talk on Jersey First TV interviews Lynne Lippincott and Mark Demo, founders of Citizens for NJ Election Integrity (C4NJEI).

Watch the interview: <https://x.com/theamazinguribe/status/1849283141573226976>

C4NJEI hosts a weekly working group every Thursday evening on the topic of election integrity and has been instrumental in supporting the EI legal initiatives across the state including here in Mercer County.

For more information [email info@citizens4njei.org](mailto:info@citizens4njei.org)

Public Corner

Public Local Meetings

Interested in attending public meetings? Here are a few in your area for this month.

<https://www.mercercounty.org/i-want-to/calendar-meeting-list>

HVRSD School Board Meeting

Monday - November 18, 2024 (Regular), at 6:30pm
425 S Main St. | Pennington, NJ 08534
Or Livestream on YouTube

Municipal Township Meetings

<https://www.hopewelltpw.org/calendar.aspx?CID=32>

Tuesday, November 12 at 6:30pm
Monday, November 25 at 6:30pm
Meetings are in hybrid format- Township Municipal Building & Zoom

Township meetings will be held at HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL SERVICES BUILDING 201 Washington Crossing - Pennington Road, Titusville, NJ 08560

Board of Elections Meeting

Tuesday - November 12, 2024 9:00pm Regular
Board of Elections Meetings will be at 930 Spruce St., Lawrence, NJ 08648

Mercer County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Schedule -- November 2024
Tuesday November 12, 2024 6:00pm Agenda Meeting
Thursday November 14, 2024 6:00pm Formal Meeting
Monday November 25, 2024 6:00pm Agenda and Formal Meeting

Agenda and Formal Meetings will take place at the Mercer County Administration Building, Room 211, 640 South Broad St., Trenton, NJ unless otherwise stated. In order to encourage full participation of these meetings, please submit any requests for accommodations of people with disabilities to the Clerk to the Board, Mercer County Administration Building, PO Box 8068, Trenton, NJ 08650

(609) 989-6584 {V/TTY} {Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 101-336}

TruthBTold





At the Movies, Bookstores

The Inauguration of the 45th President of the United States

Editor's Note: Read and watch a great American's beautiful message

REMARKS OF PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP – AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY INAUGURAL ADDRESS FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 2017 WASHINGTON, D.C.

As Prepared for Delivery –

Chief Justice Roberts, President Carter, President Clinton, President Bush, President Obama, fellow Americans, and people of the world: thank you.

We, the citizens of America, are now joined in a great national effort to rebuild our country and to restore its promise for all of our people.

Together, we will determine the course of America and the world for years to come.

We will face challenges. We will confront hardships. But we will get the job done.

Every four years, we gather on these steps to carry out the orderly and peaceful transfer of power, and we are grateful to President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama for their gracious aid throughout this transition. They have been magnificent.

Today's ceremony, however, has very special meaning. Because today we are not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, or from one party to another – but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People.

For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost.

Washington flourished – but the people did not share in its wealth.

Politicians prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed.

The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country.

Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs; and while they celebrated in our nation's Capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.

That all changes – starting right here, and right now, because this moment is your moment: it belongs to you.

It belongs to everyone gathered here today and everyone watching all across America.

This is your day. This is your celebration.

And this, the United States of America, is your country.



Photo by Doug Mills, New York Times

What truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people.

January 20th 2017, will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again.

The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.

Everyone is listening to you now.

You came by the tens of millions to become part of a historic movement the likes of which the world has never seen before.

At the center of this movement is a crucial conviction: that a nation exists to serve its citizens.

Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families, and good jobs for themselves.

These are the just and reasonable demands of a righteous public.

But for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential.

This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.

We are one nation – and their pain is our pain. Their dreams are our dreams; and their success will be our success. We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny.

The oath of office I take today is an oath of allegiance to all Americans.

For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry;

Subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military;

We've defended other nation's borders while refusing to defend our own;

And spent trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay.

We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon.

One by one, the factories shuttered and left our shores, with not even a thought about the millions upon millions of American workers left behind.

The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed across the entire world.

But that is the past. And now we are looking only to the future.

We assembled here today are issuing a new decree to be heard in every city, in every foreign capital, and in every hall of power.

From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land.

From this moment on, it's going to be America First.

Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families.

We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength.

I will fight for you with every breath in my body – and I will never, ever let you down.

America will start winning again, winning like never before.

We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams.

We will build new roads, and highways, and bridges, and airports, and tunnels, and railways all across our wonderful nation.

We will get our people off of welfare and back to work – rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor.

We will follow two simple rules: Buy American and Hire American.

We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world – but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first.

We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow.

We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones – and unite the civilized world against Radical Islamic Terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth.

At the bedrock of our politics will be a total allegiance to the United States of America, and through our loyalty to our country, we will rediscover our loyalty to each other.

When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice.

The Bible tells us, "how good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity."

We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity.

When America is united, America is totally unstoppable.

There should be no fear – we are protected, and we will always be protected.

We will be protected by the great men and women of our military and law enforcement and, most importantly, we are protected by God.

Finally, we must think big and dream even bigger.

In America, we understand that a nation is only living as long as it is striving.

We will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action – constantly complaining but never doing anything about it.

The time for empty talk is over.

Now arrives the hour of action.

Do not let anyone tell you it cannot be done. No challenge can match the heart and fight and spirit of America.

We will not fail. Our country will thrive and prosper again.

We stand at the birth of a new millennium, ready to unlock the mysteries of space, to free the Earth from the miseries of disease, and to harness the energies, industries and technologies of tomorrow.

A new national pride will stir our souls, lift our sights, and heal our divisions.

It is time to remember that old wisdom our soldiers will never forget: that whether we are black or brown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots, we all enjoy the same glorious freedoms, and we all salute the same great American Flag.

And whether a child is born in the urban sprawl of Detroit or the windswept plains of Nebraska, they look up at the same night sky, they fill their heart with the same dreams, and they are infused with the breath of life by the same almighty Creator.

So to all Americans, in every city near and far, small and large, from mountain to mountain, and from ocean to ocean, hear these words:

You will never be ignored again.

Your voice, your hopes, and your dreams, will define our American destiny. And your courage and goodness and love will forever guide us along the way.

Together, We Will Make America Strong Again.

We Will Make America Wealthy Again.

We Will Make America Proud Again.

We Will Make America Safe Again.

And, Yes, Together, We Will Make America Great Again. Thank you, God Bless You, And God Bless America.

Source: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/>

Watch "The Inauguration of the 45th President of the United States": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRBsJNdK1t0>

We the People of Interest

On this Veterans Day: A Soldier's Pledge

Source: https://www.emeraldhost.net/files/87644/SoldiersPledge_FINAL_CC_Article.pdf

Every Veterans Day, we as a nation stop to think about the courage and sacrifice shown by the men and women who have served our country. We visit the graves of family members who gave literally all that they had to defend our shores and uphold our freedom. And we remember the words of President Ronald Reagan, who said, "The price for freedom at times has been high, but we have never been unwilling to pay that price."



Photo source: C6-5, President Reagan giving the Inaugural Address from the U.S. Capitol. 01/20/1981. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/audiovisual/white-house-photo-collection-galleries/1981-inaugural>

We were reminded of those words recently when we came across passages from Reagan's First Inaugural Address. In his first speech as president, Reagan gave tribute to all the heroes who have paid freedom's price. He highlighted one hero in particular by recounting the story of Martin Treptow, a young American who fought in World War I. Treptow never made it home from that awful conflict, but before he died, he made and lived a solemn pledge—a pledge to do everything within his power to serve our country. We feel his pledge speaks for every man and woman who has ever worn a uniform. For every hero who never came home.

This Veterans Day, it's worth taking a minute to read both Reagan and Treptow's words. It's worth a few minutes more to quietly ponder their meaning. Below is an excerpt from Reagan's speech in which he quotes Treptow's pledge. We hope you find it as moving as we do.

The Inauguration of the 40th President of the United States Ronald W. Reagan's First Inaugural Address, January 20, 1981 (excerpts)

If we look to the answer as to why, for so many years, we achieved so much, prospered as no other people on Earth, it was because here, in this land, we unleashed the energy and individual genius of man to a greater extent than has ever been done before. Freedom and the dignity of the individual have been more available and assured here than in any other place on Earth. The price for this freedom at times has been high, but we have never been unwilling to pay that price.

...

Those who say that we are in a time when there are no heroes just don't know where to look. Directly in front of me, [stands] the monument to a monumental man: George Washington, father of our country. A man of humility who came to greatness reluctantly. He led America out of revolutionary victory into infant nationhood. Off to one side, the stately memorial to Thomas Jefferson. The Declaration of Independence flames with his eloquence. And then beyond the Reflecting Pool the dignified columns of the Lincoln Memorial. Whoever would understand in his heart the meaning of America will find it in the life of Abraham Lincoln.

Beyond those monuments to heroism is the Potomac River, and on the far shore the sloping hills of Arlington National Cemetery with its row on row of simple white markers bearing crosses or Stars of David. They add up to only a tiny fraction of the price that has been paid for our freedom. Each one of those markers is a monument to the kinds of hero I spoke of earlier. Their lives ended in places called Belleau Wood, The Argonne, Omaha Beach, Salerno and halfway around the world on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Pork Chop Hill, the Chosin Reservoir, and in a hundred rice paddies and jungles of a place called Vietnam.

Under one such marker lies a young man—Martin Treptow—who left his job in a smalltown barbershop in 1917 to go to France with the famed Rainbow Division. There, on the western front, he was killed trying to carry a message between battalions under heavy artillery fire. We are told that on his body was found a diary. On the flyleaf under the heading, "My Pledge," he had written these words:

"America must win this war. Therefore, I will work, I will save, I will sacrifice, I will endure, I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the issue of the whole struggle depended on me alone."

The crisis we are facing today does not require of us the kind of sacrifice that Martin Treptow and so many thousands of others were called upon to make. It does require, however, our best effort, and our willingness to believe in ourselves and to believe in our capacity to perform great deeds; to believe that together, with God's help, we can and will resolve the problems which now confront us. And, after all, why shouldn't we believe that? We are Americans.

Treptow's story and the pledge he wrote in his diary could have been lost to history. However, President Ronald Reagan brought Treptow's story to light during his first inaugural address in 1981. Below is a portion of that address that all Americans should hear: <https://1776history.com/2014/07/26/the-story-of-martin-treptow/>

Martin Treptow is not a name found in most history books. However, his story reminds us that America's true makeup is found in the everyday acts of goodness and selflessness of anonymous Americans.

Mercer We the People of Hopewell Valley Newsletters:

Access previous issues at: <https://hvrageop.org/hvra-top-issues/>

To report a correction or share feedback, please email us at info@mercervethepeople.com