



NEWSLETTER

January 2025 ISSUE#: HV011

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 Rosedale Mills and local library. Any other suggested location(s) please let us know.

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

2024 THE CHOICE: DONALD TRUMP

By Sam Jacobs, December 12, 2024 in Time

Three days before Thanksgiving, the former and future President of the United States is sitting in the sun-filled dining room of his Florida home and private club. In the lavish reception area, more than a dozen people have been waiting for nearly two hours for Donald Trump to emerge. His picks for National Security Adviser, special envoy to the Middle East, Vice President, and chief of staff huddle nearby. All afternoon, Trump pipes music throughout the 1927 oceanfront estate from a 2,000-song playlist he curates: Sinéad O'Connor's "Nothing Compares 2 U," ABBA's "The Winner Takes It All," James Brown's "It's a Man's Man's Man's World."

For 97 years, the editors of TIME have been picking the Person of the Year: the individual who, for better or for worse, did the most to shape the world and the headlines over the past 12 months. In many years, that choice is a difficult one. In 2024, it was not.

Since he began running for President in 2015, perhaps no single individual has played a larger role in changing the course of politics and history than Trump. He shocked many by winning the White House in 2016, then led the U.S. through a chaotic term that included the first year of a pandemic as well as a



Photo: by Platon for TIME, Time Magazine
Cover December 12, 2024

period of nationwide protest, and that ended with his losing the election by 7 million votes and provoking the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. The smart money wagered that we had witnessed the end of Trump.

If that moment marked Trump's nadir, today we are witnessing his apotheosis. On the cusp of his second presidency, all of us—from his most fanatical supporters to his most fervent critics—are living in the Age of Trump. He dispatched his Republican rivals in near record time. For weeks, he campaigned largely from the New York courtroom where he would be convicted on 34 felony counts. His sole debate with President Joe Biden in June led to his opponent's eventual exit from the race. Sixteen days later, he survived an assassination attempt at a campaign rally. In the sprint that followed, he outlasted Vice President Kamala Harris, sweeping all seven swing states and emerging from the election at the height of his popularity. "Look what happened," Trump told his supporters in his election-night victory speech. "Isn't this crazy?" He almost couldn't believe it himself.

Trump has remade American politics in the process. He won by enlarging his base, seizing the frustration over rising prices and benefiting from a global turn against incumbents. With those tailwinds, exit polls suggest that he won the largest percentage of Black Americans for a Republican since Gerald Ford and the most Latino voters of any GOP nominee since George W. Bush. Suburban women, whose anger over restrictions to reproductive rights was thought to be a bulwark for the Democrats, moved not away but toward him. He became the first Republican in 20 years to win more votes than the Democrat, with 9 of 10 American counties increasing their support for Trump from 2020.

Now we watch as members of Congress, international institutions, and global leaders once again align themselves with his whims. The carousel of Trumpworld characters spins anew. This time, we think we know what to expect. Supporters cheer even his promises to take revenge on his enemies and dismantle the government. In a matter of weeks, Trump will be returning to the Oval Office with his intentions clear: tariff imports, deport millions, and threaten the press. Put RFK Jr. in charge of vaccines. Chance war with Iran. "Anything can happen," he told us.

Sitting with TIME three weeks after the election, Trump was more subdued than when we visited him at Mar-a-Lago in March. He is happiest to be in a fight, and now that he has won, he sounded almost wistful, recognizing that he had run for office for the final time. "It's sad in a way. It will never happen again," Trump told us. And while he is thinking about how that chapter has ended, for Americans and for the world, it is also the beginning of a new one. Trump is once again at the center of the world, and in as strong a position as he has ever been.

Over time, we've seen the Person of the Year franchise shift: from Man of the Year to its current designation; from the period between the world wars, defined by leaders like Mohandas Gandhi and Wallis Simpson, to the first quarter of the 21st century, an era marked by the tremendous changes ushered in by a technological revolution. Although the American presidency has evolved across these eras, its influence has not diminished. Today, we are witnessing a resurgence of populism, a widening mistrust in the institutions that defined the last century, and an eroding faith that liberal values will lead to better lives for most people. Trump is both agent and beneficiary of it all.

For marshaling a comeback of historic proportions, for driving a once-in-a-generation political realignment, for reshaping the American presidency and altering America's role in the world, Donald Trump is TIME's 2024 Person of the Year.

Read and access the article: <https://time.com/7201547/person-of-the-year-2024-donald-trump-choice/>

"Donald Trump is TIME's 2024 Person of the Year" read and access the full article, By Eric Cortellessa in Time, December 12, 2024: <https://time.com/7200212/person-of-the-year-2024-donald-trump/>

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Education

What's Happening in HVRSD Schools?

HVRSD Board Of Education Meeting November 18, 2024

By The Wall of Ed

Agenda: <https://go.boarddocs.com/nj/hvrsd/Board.nsf/Public#tab-meetings>

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5iwtl-kVDg>

The next BOE meeting will be on January 6, 2025, at 6:30pm at the board office 425 South Main St. Pennington.

Student Representative Report

- Amazing achievements in fall sports:
 - Girls Varsity Soccer won the CVCC Tournament
 - Boys Varsity Football had an undefeated regular season
 - Girls cross country had an invitation to the meet of champions first time since 2009
- In response to Hurricane Helene, CHS held several fundraising events to raise money to support Mountain Heritage High School in North Carolina. The school was closed for over 50 days, but it has since re-opened to students.

Student Safety Data Report

We were provided with an update on our district's disciplinary incidents, trends, and best practices that the district takes to help address student safety. These measures include community connection, teaching social emotional learning skills, provide mental health support, and prevention and intervention. One board member asked about the increase in number of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) claims, and they allege that this is mainly due to a worldwide crisis in youth mental health issues. Studies indicate that when students are struggling with mental health, they are more likely to exhibit behaviors that could lead to them becoming a target of potential bullying.

In response to the findings in the report, the district is looking into Tier 2 interventions that don't rely solely on our school counselors and can be implemented by any faculty member that receives training in them.

Transgender Policy 5756

We reported on this in our last issue, but we wanted to provide some additional information. Policy 5756 is our district's transgender policy and it gives students from PK to high school the right to use the bathroom, locker-room, and play on sports teams based on their gender identity, not their biological sex. The policy also says that teachers and administrators are not allowed to discuss a child's gender identity with their parents, and as a result, a student could go by a completely different gender and name at school with parents being left in the dark.

A couple of months ago, a community member asked that policy 5756 be revised to facilitate clearer communication and 3 revisions were suggested: add the definition of sex to the policy, revise the term to describe gender identity (the policy says we ALL have a gender identity), and replace the term sex assigned at birth to sex observed at birth. Please click here to view last month's issue which contains more information <https://mercervethepeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/1224-MercerWe.pdf>.

Many of the people who spoke during public comment asked that the policy remain in place as is, but one resident reiterated the fact that the policy should be revised using terms that are based on facts and should be free from political bias. It should ensure that all students have equal access to fair conditions. As we have seen in female sports, this practice doesn't allow females rights to privacy, dignity, safety, feelings, equal opportunity and fair competition in sports.

The policy committee responded and said our board's attorney advised to keep it as is because it meets NJ law against discrimination, which is 2017 state statute that requires a transgender policy per NJ State department of education guidelines. It should be noted that the board was never asked to repeal the policy, which has occurred in several other districts in the state, they were only asked to make minor changes to the wording of the policy. In the end, the policy committee declined to make any changes.

Here is a copy of HVRSD Policy 5756: <https://mercervethepeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/5756-Transgender-NonConforming-Students-2016-06-20.pdf>

Climate Change is Leading to an Increase in Anxiety Among Some Students

Ms. McGrath gave an update on behalf of the Climate Action Committee, stating that we are in the warmest year on record and she is concerned that our kids are struggling because they worry about climate change and the political climate, "even though they are young it bleeds into their world", and "they need us to show that we care about their concerns." The

Climate Action Team is working to decarbonize our school buildings, and the team feels there is uncertainty about how much support we will have at a federal level with the new administration coming in.

New Government Committee Discussed

During the new business section, a proposed item to form a new Government Committee was discussed. The board feels that our district has some shortcomings when it comes to communicating with local and state government, including with the towns Hopewell Borough, Hopewell Township, and Pennington that the district serves. At times we have conflicting and competing political interests, and our responsibility is to bridge that gap and make sure we are having open lines of communication with local government. It was also suggested that we work to build a relationship with our Legislative District 15 Representatives, as we are struggling to implement policies that come out of Trenton.

Dr. Treece said that she reached out to our board attorney and he doesn't know of any other boards who do this because as a board, they have to be careful not to be political. They have not decided who would sit on this committee if it were formed, but would likely be open to community members and student representatives.

High School Student Representative to the Board Role Expanded

The board approved changes to expand the role of the student representative to the board of education in order to add additional voices from the students and expand on their expectations for attending board and committee meetings. Currently the district has one representative and they hope to add more, and include students from more diverse backgrounds. This change will hopefully lead to a stronger collaboration between students and the board and will act as a way for the representatives to inform students about what is going on in our district through student council meetings.

A National Concern: Students Knowledge Of Civics Continues To Decline

By Sylvia Kocses

At the December 2024 Board of Education meeting Dr. Michael Wilson shared briefly about the importance of civics education in our K-12 curriculum. He questioned whether our students are proficient in understanding the civic ideas, practices, values and principles that form the basis of our constitutional republic? Do they know the functions and limitations of government, the role of a citizen in a democratic society and how people and events have contributed to the development of our American heritage? To answer those questions he suggested that the district obtain data that would measure our students current knowledge of civics and, if necessary, increase and improve curriculum that teaches citizenship knowledge and skills.

NJ State Senator Shirley Turner (D-Mercer) expressed similar concerns in 2021 when she encouraged the state to require a half-year standalone civics course in middle schools.

"Safeguarding our democracy is now more urgent than ever and one of the best ways we can do that is by teaching our future generations about the importance of civic skills, engagement, and value of participation in the democratic process. The lack of civics knowledge creates a challenge to maintaining a perfect union, establishing justice and insuring domestic tranquility."

Some data is available to address Dr. Wilson's questions. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) measures 8th grade proficiency in US History, geography and civics. In 2022 only 22% of students scored proficient in civics. Too few students take the test in civics to provide results by state but the average score was 28 points below the level designating proficiency. That means that many students cannot describe the structure and function of government or identify simple historical concepts in primary or secondary sources. Only one in three students could match the three branches of government to its core function. On another typical question just 45% of 8th graders chose the correct answer. **"Which of the following is a right guaranteed by the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution?"**

- **Right to public education**
- **Right to health care**
- **Right to trial by jury**
- **Right to vote"**

While young people are more involved in supporting causes and candidates they like and are more visible as activists and advocates they seem to know less and less about their history and government. Frederick Hess and Michael Q. McShane share in their book **"Getting Education Right" (pg. 83)**

"There is common ground among progressives and conservatives that we need K-12 schools to prepare youth for thoughtful self-government, citizenship and responsible life. Participation in politics alone doesn't safeguard self-government. It must be leavened with knowledge, a sense of responsibility and an appreciation for how our government works."

A search by AI provides 10 reasons why civics education is necessary:

"It informs students about their rights and responsibilities, preserves democratic institutions, encourages voting and community service, develops analytical skills to evaluate political issues and policies, promotes the rule of law, encourages holding government officials accountable for their actions, cultivates respect for diversity of thought, enhances understanding of local, national and global issues, and equips young people to be future leaders in their communities."

The **Hoover Institution Press** reports that 10 states (including NJ) do not require a civics course nor a civics test for students to receive a high school diploma. Five states require a full year civics course and the passing of a standard civics test. Nineteen states require a half-year civics course and the passing of a standard civic test. Fourteen require a half-year or full-year course but no test requirement. Two states have no course requirement but require students to take a civics assessment. Many states use the US Citizenship and Immigration Services test (the naturalization test given to immigrants to become citizens) and require a passing score of 60/100 questions.

According to the Curriculum Guides on the Hopewell Valley School District website, only 45-60 days of instruction in civics is provided in eighth grade as part of their US History course on the Colonial Era through Reconstruction. A Citizenship Pre-test is given to determine their prior knowledge but no mention is made of a post-test or passing score.

Are there reasons that might explain the decline in civics knowledge among our youth today? First and foremost is that teaching civics relies heavily on reading comprehension. But students' reading ability has declined over the last 20 years. Genuine education in civics should rely on primary sources such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Federalist Papers, Frederick Douglass' speech on "The Meaning of the Fourth of July to the Negro", the 1848 Seneca Falls Declaration and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and others. Solving the reading crisis is critical if 68% of US fourth graders scored below proficient in reading in 2022 on the NAEP test.

Another possible reason is a quality civics education would contribute to developing a love for our country, foster a greater sense of national identity and encourage assimilation into the American culture. But today there is a tendency to interpret past events in terms of modern day concepts and values. Some social studies educators and the course curricula seeks to delegitimize the ideals and achievements of Western civilization and instead teach students that their history is largely shameful. Often there is excessive criticism about the sins of the United States without proper recognition of her triumphs, greatness and stability. **"The 1776 Report" (pg. 34)** explains:

"True patriotism is neither blind to the flaws nor fanatical in believing that America is the source of all good. Rather, the right sort of love of country holds it up to an objective standard of right and wrong with the desire and intent that the country do what is right. Where the country has done what is good, citizens justly praise those who came before them. Where it has done wrong, they should criticize the country and work to make sure that we -the people who govern it- do what is right. Rather than cast aside the serious study of America's founding principles or breed contempt for America's heritage, our educational system should aim to teach students about the true principles and history of our country."

Civics education helps students realize that neither the United States nor any other nation has perfectly lived up to the universal truths of equality, liberty, justice and government by consent. Sir Roger Scruton (1944-2020) wrote:

"We live in an imperfect world, filled with imperfect people who have created imperfect institutions. That is why we value those things that have stood the test of time and the values that unite us like gratitude, personal responsibility, attachment to family and community and commitment to opportunity. Good things are easily destroyed but not easily created."

Finally, including a half-year or full-year course in Civics into an already crowded academic schedule may be impossible without changes to other course requirements or initiatives like social and emotional learning, climate change education, increased global content in social studies and DEI.

On July 4th, 2026 our country will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Civics education is critical to insure that the rising generation understands the history and principles of the founding of the United States and how those principles provide a pathway to renewed American unity and a confidence in our future as a nation.

End The Department Of Education's DEI Gravy Train

By Washington Examiner, December 15, 2024

President Joe Biden's Department of Education spent over a billion dollars in the past four years on grants to local school districts for hiring, programming, and training, all designed to promote the Left's toxic and divisive diversity, equity, and inclusion ideology. President-elect Donald Trump's new education secretary, Linda McMahon, should turn off the spigot on Day One.

According to a new report from the parental rights advocacy group Parents Defending Education, the grants went to a range of areas in education and were disbursed to K-12 schools and postsecondary schools alike. To fund hiring initiatives based on DEI, \$489 million was given, while \$343 million was spent on DEI programs that included training and activism, and an additional \$169 million was granted to school districts to pay for DEI-centered mental health programs.

On an individual level, the grants are even more egregious. More than \$21 million was given to Montgomery County Public Schools in North Carolina for a program that taught teachers that they should treat students from racial minority backgrounds differently. Ypsilanti Community Schools in Michigan received \$15 million for various programs, including hiring a consultant who was paid nearly \$20,000 to instruct teachers on “culturally responsive teaching.”

The Biden administration’s adherence to DEI in policymaking is hardly a secret. Within minutes of taking the oath of office in 2021, Biden signed an executive order that directed the federal government to make racial equity a primary goal of government policy. However, the scale to which the Department of Education, an agency ostensibly charged with ensuring better education outcomes for students, has embraced this partisan ideology at the expense of students is astounding.

Every dollar the agency has spent pushing DEI ideology is a dollar it did not spend improving education outcomes at a time when school achievement rates have plummeted, especially following the school closures of 2020-2021. This blatantly ideological approach to grant-making would be laughable if it were not so scandalous.

Instead of being good stewards of taxpayers’ dollars, the Biden administration wasted a billion dollars on a brazenly partisan agenda that benefits no one except the individuals and organizations that have so effectively gifted off the collective racial guilt of the liberal establishment. Besides pushing a divisive political agenda, this DEI grant-making project was a colossal waste of money.

Grant-making is the primary way that the Department of Education exercises its authority. Each year, billions of dollars are disbursed to schools covering all grade levels, from elementary to postgraduate. These grants come with strings attached to ensure that the taxpayer is not footing the bill for spurious or wasteful programs and initiatives.

When incoming Secretary of Education Linda McMahon and the Trump administration get to work in January, ending the odious practice of using U.S. taxpayers’ dollars to fund ideologies meant to divide young and impressionable students should be a Day One priority in order to restore an approach to grant-making that is actually focused on improving student outcomes.

Access the article: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/3258800/biden-education-department-grants-taxpayer-dollars-dei/>

Election Integrity

Citizens For NJ Election Integrity Refers Dead And Duplicate Voter Findings To The Department Of Justice

By Mark Demo

January 2nd, 2024 – New Jersey Citizens for New Jersey Election Integrity (C4NJEI) has formally submitted evidence of voter irregularities from New Jersey’s November 2024 general election to the New Jersey office of the Department of Justice. The flagged issues, uncovered through meticulous analysis, reveal cases of deceased voters casting ballots and individual voters casting more than one ballot.

Deceased Voters Voting

The analysis utilized a commercial death data service to cross-check voter rolls against death records. This service, widely used by pension funds, includes obituary verification to ensure accuracy. The review focused on two voter categories:

Vote-by-Mail Ballots: More than 820,000 mail-in voters were analyzed, resulting in 465 individuals confirmed as deceased before November 5th but recorded as having voted.

In-person Voters: More than 179,000 voters aged 84 or older who voted in person were analyzed, and 20 were identified as deceased but still listed as having cast ballots.

Detail by County

Atlantic	13	Gloucester	27	Ocean	47
Bergen	20	Hudson	12	Passaic	14
Burlington	31	Hunterdon	6	Salem	1
Camden	55	Mercer	23	Somerset	19
Cape	3	Middlesex	54	Sussex	12
Cumberland	22	Monmouth	33	Union	17
Essex	27	Morris	43	Warren	6

Detail Within Mercer County

All 23 dead Mercer County voters were mail-ins. The breakdown by Municipality is as follows:

East Windsor	2
Ewing	4
Hamilton Square	1
Hamilton	8
Lawrenceville	1
Robbinsville	1
Trenton	3
Princeton	2
Princeton Junction	1

Duplicate Votes Cast

C4NJEI analyzed the voter records of all 4,321,921 votes cast in the November election and uncovered 29 cases of duplicate voting, where apparently the same individual voter submitted multiple mail-in ballots or, in one instance, cast both a mail-in and a machine ballot. There were 4 cases of individuals voting 3 times.

Detail by County

The duplicate vote cast in Mercer County was from an individual residing in Lawrence Township.

Bergen	1	Hudson	1	Morris	1
Burlington	1	Hunterdon	1	Ocean	2
Camden	1	Mercer	1	Salem	1
Cumberland	1	Middlesex	1	Union	1
Essex	12	Monmouth	3	Warren	1

Call for Investigation

C4NJEI has referred these cases to the New Jersey office of the Department of Justice for further investigation. C4NJEI will also share the evidence with the election boards and prosecutors of all 21 New Jersey counties where such votes were counted and encourage all election officials to implement reforms to protect the integrity of the election process. “Election integrity is the cornerstone of democracy,” said Mark Demo, Co-founder and Director of C4NJEI. “We are committed to ensuring that every vote cast is valid and that public trust in our elections is maintained.”

About Citizens for NJ Election Integrity

Citizens for NJ Election Integrity is a non-partisan organization dedicated to ensuring fair and transparent elections in New Jersey. The group advocates for electoral reforms, improved voter verification processes, and public education on election integrity. For more information, please visit <http://www.citizens4njei.org/>.

Media Contact

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For further inquiries or to schedule an interview, please contact C4NJEI at the information provided above.

Election 2024

INTERVIEW: Transgender Activism Worked Against Kamala Harris In 2024

By Kevin Mooney originally published in Restoration News (December 23, 2024)

Ads highlighting Harris’ radical positions on sex changes, women’s sports resonated with voters.

Voters who “read, saw, or heard” about Kamala Harris’s support for sex-change procedures on minors said they were “more likely” to vote for Donald Trump by a three-to-one margin. That’s one of the major findings from a new poll that flies in the face of transgender activists and their allies in the media.

The poll, conducted by American Principles Project, found that opposition to the radical transgender agenda helped Trump improve his margins among voters where he did not do as well in the 2020 and 2016 elections.

The Radicals Didn’t Know What Hit Them on Election Night

Prior to the election, the radical activists thought the LGBTQIA+ agenda would sink Trump. In a stern warning to Republicans, Data for Progress, a progressive think tank and polling firm, released pre-election figures indicating that voters trusted Democrats more than Republicans when considering issues related to transgender people. The same poll also showed that a plurality of voters, including independents, thought Republicans had a “more extreme stance” on transgender issues. The apologetics for transgender activism remained in motion beyond November 5th.

After Trump defeated Harris in the electoral college and in the popular vote, the Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ activist group, went to great lengths to explain away the results. The campaign’s poll released shortly after the election showed that Harris prevailed over Trump among “Equality Voters” by an 84 percent to 14 percent margin.

“While the results of this election are deeply disappointing,” Kelly Robinson, the Human Rights Campaign president, said in a press release, “this polling shows that strong majorities of Americans want elected officials to protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination and to stay out of the health care of trans people. It also confirms that once again, anti-trans attacks were not a motivating issue for voters—all they do is sow hate and division toward a community that just wants to be their authentic selves.”

Left-leaning media outlets such as PBS also peddled the idea that transgender issues were not a top concern of voters regardless of where they stood. These same outlets also claim that to the extent ads targeting transgender policies were effective, they were also misleading. For example, PBS quoted Former Democratic Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, as saying that the ads portrayed Harris as a far-left extremist that she is not.

Challenging the Media's Transgender Narrative with Facts

But how well do these arguments square with reality?

The American Principles Project, a nonprofit group devoted to preserving the American family, has produced data in its polling that debunks the transgender narrative. Terry Schilling, the president of APP and a longtime pro-family activist has organized several campaigns on behalf of parental rights. In an interview with Restoration News, Schilling discussed how transgender politics played to Trump's advantage.

"Fifty-two percent of these voters who knew about or saw ads about how Kamala supported sex change surgeries for minors were more likely to vote for Trump," Schilling said. "But only about 15 percent of these voters said they would be more likely to vote for Harris. That's more than a three-to-one margin in favor of Trump. That's the big, major takeaway here."

But it's not the only one.

"Trump really got hurt last few elections with suburban voters," Schilling said. "But our poll shows 45 percent of suburban voters who saw the ad were more likely to vote for Trump, but only 16 percent were more likely to vote for Harris if they saw it. This was clearly a winning issue for Trump. In fact, it wasn't even close."

@Schilling1776 works tirelessly to expose the horrors of so-called "gender affirming care" on minors.

"Gender affirming care" is a propaganda term used to cover up the horrors it causes.

He exposes the Trans industry. pic.twitter.com/TGatS7meMe

— Restoration of America (@Restoration_roa) December 4, 2024

Another major question raised in APP's poll concerned women's sports. Voters were asked if the advertisements highlighting the vice president's support for policies allowing men to play in women's sports would impact their vote. In response, 47 percent said they would be "more likely" to vote for Trump while only about 15 percent said they would be "more likely" to vote for Harris.

Schilling sees a bit of duplicity at work on part of transgender activists in terms of how they conduct their polls, and the kind of terminology used in their questioning. While strong majorities of Americans support civil rights and are opposed to discrimination, they are also opposed to policies that jeopardize children and harm women's sports, he explained.

"They're using a turn of the phrase, and words to confuse people and make it seem like the transgender issue does not hurt them as much as it does," Schilling said. "But voters have caught on to the LGBTQ movement and they see it's not about equality. Instead, it's about trying to force this agenda on your kids. They want drag queen hours in schools, they want sex changes for kids, and men in women's sports and in women's private spaces."

Schilling encourages more Americans to speak forcefully against transgender policies that "engender the most vulnerable members of society." While that means running up against Hollywood figures and the "loud bullhorns of legacy media," Schilling remains confident that public opposition against transgender policies in schools and in sports will continue to gather momentum.

"When they say Equality Voters are supporting equality candidates, that's just another way of saying that Democrats vote for Democrats," Schilling said. "But there's hardly enough there for this block of voters to win the popular vote."

The Human Rights Campaign estimates that LGBTQ voters make up 8 percent of the electorate based on its analysis of exit polls.

Republicans Must Fight the Culture Wars to Win

"Republicans can't just run on economic issues," Schilling said. "Where the left is at its craziest right now, is with the transgender issues. If you support protecting children, if you think we should protect their innocence and protect them from these surgeries, and if you don't think men should be in women's sports, and you think women should have their own private space, then you're in good company with huge majorities."

While Schilling does not deny economics, inflation, and border security, and criminal activity were top tier issues in the 2024 campaign, he also sees palpable evidence that the Democrats' radical positions on transgender policies impacted swing voters.

"I think the transgender issue was a threshold issue for a lot of voters who saw just how racial Harris's policies were," Schilling said. "If you're so radical you're going to allow criminals to use tax dollars to pay for their sex changes, then you're not going to be good in other policy areas."

The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule in a few months on a case out of Tennessee involving transgender policies. After hearing oral arguments earlier this month, some media outlets have concluded the court will likely uphold the state's ban on "gender-affirming care for minors."

So what's "gender-affirming care?"

"Gender Affirming Care" is a monstrous distortion of language that is designed to hide the horrors it causes. pic.twitter.com/ifFMiZfM84

— Restoration of America (@Restoration_roa) May 28, 2024

"If Republicans keep their foot on the gas with this issue, I think it will be solved very quickly," Schilling said. "Many of these issues are rooted in the federal government and we just need to keep winning elections with the transgender issue, and you'll start to see Democrats, and Hollywood, and other cultural institutions back off."

Kevin Mooney is a Senior Investigative Researcher for Restoration News.

Read and access the article: <https://restoration-news.com/interview-transgender-activism-worked-against-kamala-harris-in-2024>

The Stench Of BO: Barack Obama's Mystique A Casualty Of The Election

By Victor Davis Hanson, December 13, 2024 in The Daily Signal (Commentary)

Former President Barack Obama had long been rumored as the catalyst for the 2020 Joe Biden nomination—and thereafter played the whispering puppeteer behind the subsequent lost Biden administration years.

As such, he and his coterie proved to be the virtual architects of the Biden administration, one of the most unpopular and failed presidencies in American history.

Recall earlier that after a flailing candidate Biden lost the first three 2020 primaries and caucuses, his inert campaign was headed nowhere.

Obama and fellow Democratic insiders abruptly engineered the withdrawal of his rival 2020 presidential candidates: hard-left but likely sure-loser candidates, including Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and Pete Buttigieg.

The Obamas ignored or withheld from the public their own firsthand knowledge that Biden was suffering from signs of dementia.

Instead, they found Biden's cognitive decline and his former concocted reputation as workingman's Joe useful as a veneer for a veritable Obama third-term, "phone it in" administration. Or as wistful Obama once conditioned his dream of a third term: "If I could make an arrangement where I had a stand-in, a front man or front woman, and they had an earpiece in."

The Obamaites then got their wish for four years of enacted hard-left directives that they could only have dreamed of while in actual power.

But their radical menu since 2021 had divided and nearly wrecked the nation—hyperinflation, 12 million illegal aliens, a ruined border, spiraling crime, a shattered foreign policy of appeasement, the popular backlash against DEI/woke/trans chauvinism, partisan lawfare, and weaponization of the government.

And the ruling radicalism beneath the Biden facade eventually cost the Democrats nearly everything—the presidency, the House, and the Senate.

An inert Biden is departing office with a 36% favorability rating in a recent Emerson poll. His Democratic nominee replacement, losing presidential candidate Vice President Kamala Harris, also has virtually vacated her office with 40 days left of her tenure.

Failed candidate Harris has been roundly faulted by staffers and donors for blowing through some \$2 billion in assorted 2024 campaign money.

She ended up doing worse against Donald Trump than Biden himself had in 2020.

Many Democrats believe that they might have done just as well had Biden stayed on the ticket even in his vastly diminished state.

The Obamas were further blasted for nullifying the wishes of 14 million primary voters by forcing Biden off the ticket—ironically in the same backroom, antidemocratic manner they had cleared the way for him in 2020.

Obama emerged from his comfortable retirement to hit the 2024 campaign trail, schooling the country that President-emeritus Trump was a dictator, a fascist, a tyrant, and, of course, a "racist."

The more Trump polled even with, or ahead of, Harris, the more an exasperated and ignored Obama talked down to supposedly low-information voters.

But by the time Harris lost the election, voters had tuned out a nagging and patronizing Obama—and his stale, now-dated "hope-and-change" boilerplate speeches.

What Obama did not mention, but what the voters knew, was that the border was more secure under Trump than during

either the Obama's or Biden's tenure.

Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded countries during the Obama and Biden administrations, but stayed put on Trump's watch.

Obama's bizarre vision of a new Middle East had sought to empower Iran as a supposed counterweight against moderate Arab nations and our ally Israel.

Years ago, Obama invited the Russians into Syria, empowered dictatorial Syria, berated Israel nonstop, and all but ignored the violence of Iran's surrogate terrorists: Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis.

But after Oct. 7, 2023, Israel retaliated to the mass slaughter of Jewish civilians with all-out war against Hamas and Hezbollah—rendering these once feared terrorists nearly impotent.

In an exchange of air attacks with Iran, Israel showed the world that Iran was as militarily weak as its chanting and threats were tiresome and shrill.

Iran is now tottering on the brink, as its terrorist appendages—including most recently the Assad dynasty in Syria—are melting away.

Israel and the moderate Arab regimes are in ascendance, as the entire crazy Obama-envisioned Middle East agenda melts away.

The 2024 anemic Democratic campaign and the Trump Electoral College and popular vote victories—combined with record defections of Hispanic and African American voters from the Democratic Party to Trump—proved a resounding rejection of the Obama legacy and his surrogates' left-wing visions.

Yet after the people spoke in the election, the more Obama whined that democracy itself had failed him. Voters, he remonstrated, who disagreed with him were written off as racist and sexist.

Obama again harped that constituents did not know what was good for them.

And then, the disappointed former community organizer suddenly disappeared—pondering to which of his own four mansions his private jet would fly him home to commiserate.

Access the article: https://www.dailysignal.com/2024/12/13/the-evaporation-of-barack-obamas-mystique/?mkt_tok=ODI0LU1IVC0zMDQAAAGXjTq2oif63J-Q2aKb4A61eBc6hbYKJi8_opKgJlNwLjyRWlePfHYsyKEwIw4LNKPYwK_QkyCnoaVfSo3vSFgD_p7mQZvfDbcgI5XmolT0qdmmlty2g

SCOTUS Justice Roberts Issues Warning Ahead Of Trump Taking Office

By Noah Stanton, January 3, 2025 in istandforfreedom.com

The pillars of American democracy are showing dangerous signs of strain as we enter 2025. Indeed, there is mounting evidence that one of our most essential institutions faces unprecedented threats from multiple directions. The very foundation of our constitutional republic – the independent judiciary that the Founding Fathers established to protect our liberties – stands at a critical crossroads.

For generations, Americans have relied on our courts as the steady hand of justice. They are meant to ensure that no person or power could rise above the law. That bedrock principle has guided our nation through its darkest hours. Sadly, it is now facing a convergence of threats that strike at the heart of our constitutional order.

The situation has become so dire that it has prompted an extraordinary intervention from the highest levels of our judicial system.

In a sobering year-end report released on December 31, 2024, Chief Justice John Roberts issued one of the strongest warnings of his tenure. He identified four specific threats that he says are actively undermining America's judicial independence. These threats are "violence, intimidation, disinformation, and threats to defy lawfully entered judgments."

Mounting Threats To Judicial Independence

The timing of Roberts' warning, just weeks before President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, carries particular weight. While the Chief Justice didn't mention Trump by name, his report pointedly addressed the growing trend of public officials who have "raised the specter of open disregard for federal court rulings."

"Public officials certainly have a right to criticize the work of the judiciary," Roberts wrote, "but they should be mindful that intemperance in their statements when it comes to judges may prompt dangerous reactions by others."

The evidence supporting Roberts' concerns is stark and undeniable. According to official U.S. Marshals Service data released in November 2024, serious threats against federal judges have more than tripled over the past decade. There have been 1,007 serious threats investigated between 2019 and 2024. The situation has become so volatile that Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett confirmed in congressional testimony this past October that she has been advised to wear protective gear at certain public appearances.

"Today, in the computer era, intimidation can take different forms," Roberts explained in his report. "Disappointed litigants rage at judicial decisions on the Internet, urging readers to send a message to the judge."

Constitutional Foundations At Risk

Chief Justice's warning draws a direct line to America's founding principles. In a pointed historical reference, Roberts recalled how King George III's attempt to strip judicial independence from colonial courts was "not well received" by our nation's founders. This is a clear reminder that judicial independence was among the fundamental rights enshrined in Article III of the Constitution.

Constitutional scholars note that Roberts' warning carries echoes of similar challenges faced during other pivotal moments in American history.

"The independence of our courts has always been tested during times of political tension," explained judicial historian James Madison Thompson. "But what makes this moment unique is the combination of physical threats with systematic attempts to undermine court authority."

The crisis extends beyond mere rhetoric. Federal authorities have documented an alarming rise in concrete threats against judges and their families. In June of 2022, an armed man was arrested near Justice Brett Kavanaugh's home after making threats against the justice's life. These incidents represent what Roberts describes as "wholly unacceptable" attacks on judicial independence.

A Call To Action

Looking ahead, the Chief Justice's message serves as both a warning and a call to action for Americans who value constitutional order and the rule of law.

"I urge all Americans to appreciate this inheritance from our founding generation and cherish its endurance," Roberts concluded.

The solution, according to constitutional experts, lies in returning to the fundamental principles that have sustained our republic for over two centuries: respect for the rule of law, protection of constitutional boundaries, and recognition that an independent judiciary serves as the ultimate guardian of our liberties.

As America stands at this crossroads, Roberts' warning reminds us that the preservation of judicial independence isn't just about protecting judges. It's also about defending the very system of ordered liberty that generations of Americans have fought to preserve. The question now facing our nation is whether we will heed this warning before it's too late.

Access the article: https://istandforfreedom.com/supreme-court-roberts-trump/?utm_source=actengage&utm_medium=email

Are The Years Of Madness Ending?

By Victor Davis Hanson, December 23, 2024 in Front Page Magazine

Eagerness to get rid of the current nightmare is pervasive.

Never in U.S. history has a president-elect been welcomed as the real president before his January 20 inauguration. And never has the incumbent president so willingly surrendered his last two months in office and all but abdicated—to the relief of his nation and the rest of the world.

One reason so many are welcoming Trump's return is the universally desperate hope that his election spelled an end to a collective madness at home and its ripples abroad during the last four years. And why not?

Nations overseas had never quite witnessed anything like the lethal August 2021 American flight from Afghanistan. That utter humiliation and impotence of the U.S. military likely signaled to Russia there would be no consequences if it invaded Ukraine—and it did; to Iran that it could now unleash Hamas and Hezbollah on Israel—and it did; and to China that it could daily threaten Taiwan and send a spy balloon across the United States with impunity—and it did.

The result was the current global chaos perhaps not seen since the late 1930s when a confused United States was similarly a bystander to the rise of bellicose regimes and wars. The Biden administration shrugged that the Red Sea, the Black Sea, the South China Sea, the Straits of Hormuz, and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea all became dangerous to the U.S. Navy and unsafe to world shipping.

A disparate group of nuclear and near-nuclear powers—Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran—are either at war with Western allies or threatening war with them. Their confidence was predicated on the assumption that the U.S. after 2020 was engaged in a Maoist-like cultural revolution that warred on its own security, energy, military, universities, and social unity—and would continue with a second Biden term.

The Biden-era cultural revolution has done great damage to the United States. The U.S. border was systematically and deliberately destroyed to allow some 10-12 million illegal entrants to pour into the U.S. without legality or background checks.

Never has an outgoing administration spitefully sold taxpayer-purchased border wall material for pennies on the dollar—rather than see it used for the purposes for which it was purchased.

Never had the U.S. experienced such an immigrant surge. And never had more than 50 million, and over 15 percent of the resident American population been foreign-born.

Why did Biden and Alejandro Mayorkas erase the border? What madness and hate drove them to dismantle federal immigration law? Was it sheer nihilism? Or a desperate but calculated effort to alter American demography for political purposes?

For four years, the public, elected officials, and pundits have all warned that Joe Biden was dangerously cognitively challenged and indeed completely unfit to fulfill the duties of the presidency.

A long-suffering nation winced as Biden slurred his words, spoke in unintelligible sound bites, stood frozen and mute, screamed at and libeled half the country, tripped, fell, wandered aimlessly, became bewildered, and more or less proved a global embarrassment. All knew Biden was not able to run the country; yet none knew exactly who was actually in charge of America in his stead. The Obamas? Leftists like Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, the Squad, Jill Biden, and the Biden staff?

Our allies worried that the usually resilient American president was now all but demented. Our enemies enjoyed these leaderless years of opportunity. And the left serially misled the public that the decrepit Biden, whom they feared in private was senile, was “dynamic,” “energetic,” and “fit as a fiddle.”

Never has a president so deserved to be removed by the 25th Amendment or through impeachment and conviction. And never has even his inner circle finally but silently agreed as they left office, the very enablers who had done their political best to mask his dementia for four long years.

Rarely have the FBI, the CIA, the IRS, the Department of Justice, and the Pentagon become weaponized and so flagrantly and with impunity broken the law, abandoned their mission statements, and served political agendas rather than the American people. Not since the J. Edgar Hoover era has the FBI hierarchy serially lied under oath, stonewalled Congress, forged a court affidavit, or partnered with the media to suppress the news. Has the FBI ever raided an ex-president's home, spied on parents at school board meetings, monitored Catholics, or tried to terrify and harass pro-life activists?

Never has the justice system, from local to state to national jurisdictions, so systematically and coordinately, sought to bankrupt, render inert, and jail an ex-president and current presidential candidate.

Never has a presidential family so brazenly profited by selling its influence to foreign interests. Never has it used the powers of the FBI and DOJ to cover up its crimes and to ensure the family filial bagman would be for years exempted by the DOJ and later pardoned by the president himself, the father of the family miscreant and privy to the family syndicate's illegal activities.

Seldom has a president and his administration sought to fuel a veritable cultural revolution to change the fabric of the nation by institutionalizing a third, transexual gender, violating civil rights law, and systematically admitting, hiring, and promoting Americans on the basis of their race and gender.

Never since the Civil War era had local and state insurrectionist governments established 600 nullification zones, in which they vowed to break federal law and consider it null and void within their jurisdictions. Never have rioters looted, burned, killed, assaulted, and occupied large swaths of cities for over 120 days, and largely with impunity.

Never had the U.S. Treasury borrowed so much money so quickly and owed \$37 in national debt—and been so intent on borrowing continuously nearly \$2 trillion a year in annual deficits.

Never has a political party sought to systematically violate long-standing traditions, customs, and often the law itself to destroy a political opponent: hiring a foreign national to spread smears among the media and bureaucracies, impeaching a president twice, trying an ex-president in the Senate, seeking to remove a presidential candidate from 16 state ballots, using five different judicial jurisdictions to try an ex-president, and serially so defaming a candidate and ex-president as a dictator, fascist, and Nazi to create a climate that encouraged two near-miss assassination attempts on him.

In sum, for the last four years, the world has watched aghast as the United States lost its collective mind and became a radical Jacobin revolutionary society.

So why is there not a sense of almost ecstatic relief, not just among conservatives but even among Democrats, that the years of darkness and madness are ending?

The global public believes that the United States will again become lawful, have a secure border, return as a beacon of free-market economics, protect its allies, deter its enemies, win over its neutrals, return to the rule of law, restore the professionalism and prestige of its government agencies, check predatory nations abroad with a new deterrent military, and prepare to lead the world in energy production, exploration of space, and scientific and technology development.

Summed up, the welcomed counterrevolution is one of restoration—to dream again that nothing is impossible, and the dreary age of stasis, envy, cynicism, and nihilism is ending, replaced again by a world without limits. No one knows quite what is ahead, but all know that it is at least better already than the current nightmare.

Access the article: <https://www.frontpagemag.com/are-the-years-of-madness-ending/>

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 - January 6th, 2025 (Organization), at 6:30pm
425 S Main St., Pennington, NJ 08534 Or Livestream on YouTube

Monday - January 27th, 2025
Bear Tavern Elementary School at 6:30pm

Municipal Township Meetings

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

Thursday, January 2nd, 2025 6:30pm Reorganization Meeting
Monday, January 13th, 2025 6:30pm
Monday, January 27th, 2025 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 - January 14, 2025 12:00pm Regular
Board of Elections Meetings will be at 930 Spruce St., Lawrence, NJ 08648

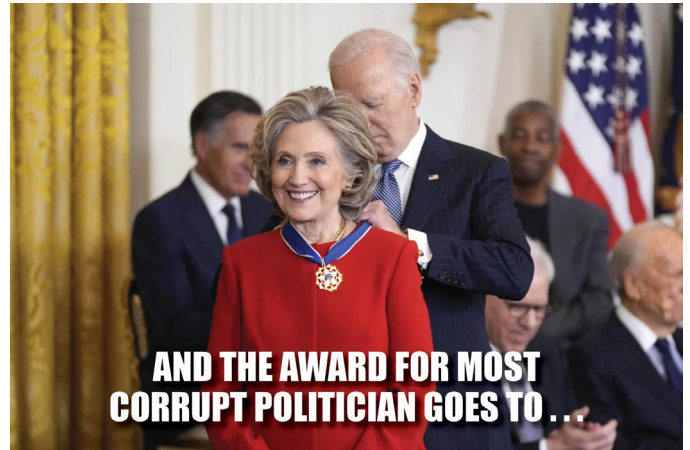
Mercer County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Schedule -- January 2025
Monday January 6, 2025 6:00pm Reorganization Meeting
Tuesday January 7, 2025 6:00pm Agenda Meeting
Thursday January 9, 2025 6:00pm 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}



At the Movies, Bookstores

How To Raise A Citizen (And Why It's Up To You To Do It)

By Lindsey Cormack • Hardcover – 304 Pages • Published August 13, 2024

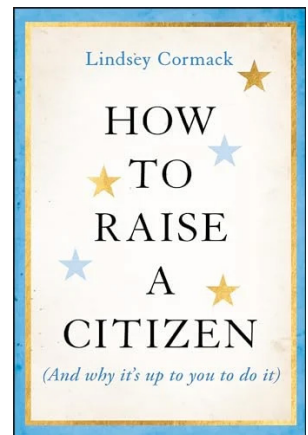
An essential guide to nurturing the next generation of responsible, informed citizens.

Lindsey Cormack's book, *How to Raise a Citizen (And Why It's Up to You to Do It)*, speaks directly to an America in which civic knowledge is alarmingly sparse and many people dread politics. It's a tool for parents, educators, and anyone eager to fill this gap. In the book, Cormack offers an engaging and practical approach to discussing political issues and the inner workings of the U.S. government with children. She explains why our schools can no longer be the sites of civic education that they used to be and provides parents with strategies and necessary know-how to be able to impart these lessons to their children. From the intricacies of the voting process to the foundational principles of democracy and the significance of key government documents like the Constitution, the author demystifies complex topics with clarity and insight.

The book is available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop, and anywhere else you find books.

Book website, about author: <https://howtoraiseacitizen.com/>

(See how you score with the 5 questions in "Do you know the basics?")



The 5 Deep Spiritual Reasons Why We Love "It's A Wonderful Life"

By Rev. Ben Johnson, December 28, 2018 in Action Institute

Over the last century no movie has been more synonymous with the Christmas season than *It's a Wonderful Life*. A copyright lapse allowed this modestly successful movie to become a staple of holiday programming for generations. But it endures, more than seven decades after its release, because it strikes at least five deep spiritual chords in every human heart.



"It's a Wonderful Life", produced and directed by Frank Capra. Seen here from left, Donna Reed as Mary Hatch Bailey, James Stewart as George Bailey and Karolyn Grimes as Zuzu. Paramount Pictures. (Photo by CBS via Getty Images)

It's a tale of sacrifice, and choosing well

It's a Wonderful Life chronicles George Bailey's evolution from a well-meaning braggart to the perfect exemplar of a servant's heart. George begins by film by articulating what Rev. Tim Keller calls a "modern identity" – a chosen self-image constructed of favored attributes and aspirations – telling Mary:

I know what I'm gonna do tomorrow, and the next day, and the next year, and the year after that. I'm shaking the dust of this crummy little town off my feet and I'm gonna see the world: Italy, Greece, the Parthenon, the Colosseum. Then, I'm coming back here and go to college and see what they know. And then I'm gonna build things. I'm gonna build airfields. I'm gonna build skyscrapers a hundred stories high. I'm gonna build bridges a mile long.

These words echo in his mind after Henry F. Potter offers George a job making nearly 10-times his salary. When Bailey learns that he's going to be a father, all purely personal considerations evaporate. At pivotal moments, George accepts a traditional identity composed of burdens which Sir Roger Scruton calls "unchosen obligations" (perhaps not entirely unchosen in the matter of his parental status): his roles as dutiful son, temporary secretary of the Building and Loan, lender of last resort to stave off insolvency, and the protector of his clients.

His cycle of sacrifice reaffirms the truth that "the greatest among you shall be your servant" (St. Matthew 23:11).

It reveals the enchantment of everyday life

Frank Capra threads the needle by underscoring the importance of seemingly mundane affairs, like business and banking.

When George's father asks him to consider working at the Building and Loan, George says he "couldn't face being cooped up for the rest of my life in a shabby little office. ... I want to do something big and something important." His father responds:

You know, George, I feel that in a small way we are doing something important, satisfying a fundamental urge. It's deep in the race for a man to want his own roof and walls and fireplace, and we're helping him get those things in our shabby little office.

Although the screenwriters may not have realized it, the pithy observation they placed in his mouth goes back to Aristotle, Aquinas, and Pope Leo XIII, who observed that "motive of [human] work is to obtain property." Business and economic activity facilitate these deep-seated human needs.

Most Americans, including many clergy, share George's youthful disdain for business, of "trying to figure out how to save three cents on a length of pipe." But the Baileys found an unmet need: providing credit to people desperate for a better life. By offering them access to capital, George Bailey gave average people an opportunity. Wise financial stewardship empowered social outcasts to escape the tyranny of working for others and instead build their own homes, own their own businesses, and benefit their own families.

When George explains how banks work, he shows his clients that they participated in their own liberation. "You're thinking of this place all wrong, as if I had the money back in a safe," he tells them. "The money's not here. Your money's in Joe's house – right next to yours. And in the Kennedy house, and Mrs. Macklin's house, and a hundred others." Their small savings built their collective dreams.

It's a Wonderful Life stands the test of time, in part, because it is based on an accurate understanding of human nature – and how consequential our workaday actions can become.

It's a David vs. Goliath story

Since Biblical times, people have loved an underdog – no people more so than Americans, who earned their independence from the world's greatest empire. George Bailey also overcame incalculable odds. Mr. Potter epitomized the crony capitalist establishment, who enjoyed such a concentration of resources and power that he kept congressmen waiting to see him. Everyone's well-being depended on Potter's favor.

The highest realization of Potterville is communism and its economic corollary, socialism. Command economics makes central planners the final arbiters of life's most consequential decisions. Regal bureaucrats determine who receives a dacha on the Black Sea and who lives in the dingy cell of a gulag, who receives emergency surgery and who is denied medical treatment – and, like Mr. Potter, they inevitably reserve the most resplendent fineries for themselves.

As long as the free market allows competition, someone will offer better services to those in need. *It's a Wonderful Life* illustrates that, unless an oppressor's monopoly is state-enforced, it will crumble as surely as the Philistine encountering the child's fatal pebble.

It's a tale of the dignity of the individual

Bailey's loans enable Southern and Eastern European immigrants to live on equal terms with other Americans, striking a blow for human dignity. Every family deserves the opportunity to earn a living. And all neighbors should gather to share their "bread, that this house may never know hunger; salt, that life may always have flavor; and wine, that joy and prosperity may reign forever."

But *It's a Wonderful Life* doesn't stop at the now-trite affirmation of ethnic equality: It uplifts the smallest minority of all, the individual.

Frank Capra once affirmed this was the movie's purpose. "The importance of the individual is the theme that it tells: that no man is a failure and that every man has something to do with his life. If he's born, he's born to do something," he said. George Bailey's biography shows us that every life holds infinite possibilities, sending ripples out into the farthest reaches of the world.

Life is sacred, the holy participation in the spark of divinity given to the human race at its creation. Respecting life from conception to natural death is the first duty of government. Rulers must also respect the rights that flow from that sublime status: liberty, property, and the ethical pursuit of happiness. Every life, if allowed to unfold organically, has the potential to be "wonderful."

It's a resurrection story

It's a Wonderful Life endures, because it taps into another story deeply woven into the fabric of the West: the Greatest Story Ever Told.

George Bailey is one of cinema's most innocent figures (if not entirely innocent in the matter of Mary's robe). He sacrificed his dreams of travel and wealth only to find himself framed for embezzlement and about to lose his business, his reputation, and his freedom. His righteous life, dedicated to others' benefit, ended with him on the lam from a bogus charge after offending the town's establishment. One might even say, if it's not stretching the metaphor too far, that his extending credit to the average person overturned the tables of Mr. Potter's moneychangers.

As George returns from his angelic vision determined to face his inequitable fate, he experiences deliverance. In Bailey's case, his redemption came from others whom his own good acts spurred to generosity. The movie both chronicles his sacrificial life, unjust sentence, "death," resurrection, and public vindication.

It's a Wonderful Life nurtures our belief that a life of righteousness will find its reward, that eventually "all manner of thing shall be well." And in the end, "The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail, with peace on earth, good-will to men."

Access the article: <https://www.acton.org/publications/transatlantic/2018/12/28/5-deep-spiritual-reasons-we-love-its-wonderful-life>

Jimmy Stewart, A World At War, And Why 'It's A Wonderful Life' Was Almost Less Wonderful: Part II

By Virginia Kruta, December 25, 2024 in *DailyWire.com*

This article was previously published on December 21, 2023.

Months after his return from combat, actor James "Jimmy" Stewart was still adrift — unmoored in the Hollywood he had previously called home, living with fellow veteran Henry Fonda, and waiting for film offers that just weren't coming in.

After a couple of months had gone by, director Frank Capra — who had worked with Stewart before in 1936's "You Can't Take It With You" — first pitched "It's a Wonderful Life." A meeting was set, and Capra described the story to Stewart and his agent Lew Wasserman.

Stewart, who had been adamant about doing a comedy upon his return to Hollywood, was reportedly taken aback at first. "You want me to do what?" he asked, and according to Capra's notes walked out of his initial pitch meeting. But Capra believed in the strength of the story — and he was equally adamant that Stewart was not just the right person to play George Bailey, he was the only person who could do it.

Stewart eventually sat down to listen to Capra's pitch in full, and he recalled the director's awkward description of the story in a 1987 interview for *Guideposts*.

"'Now, listen,' Frank began hesitantly. He seemed a little embarrassed. 'The story starts in heaven, and it's sort of the Lord telling somebody to go down to earth because there's a fellow who's in trouble, and this heavenly being goes to a small town, and ... Well, what it boils down to is, this fella who thinks he's a failure in life jumps off a bridge. The Lord sends down an angel named Clarence, who hasn't earned his wings yet, and Clarence jumps into the water to save the guy. But the angel can't swim, so the guy has to save him, and then ... This doesn't tell very well, does it?'"

The actor said his response was simple: "Frank, if you want to do a picture about a guy who jumps off a bridge and an angel named Clarence who hasn't won his wings yet coming down to save him, well, I'm your man!"



Photo courtesy of CBS via Getty Images

As Matzen explained in a 2016 interview with The Chicago Tribune, Stewart appeared to funnel all the bottled up rage, anxiety, anger, fear, and frustration into the role — making his portrayal of a man on the brink truly blur the line between fiction and reality.

“There’s a scene in the movie where he questions his sanity and he’s got this wild look about him. That’s one scene that really struck me, watching it on the big screen. And the other scene that always made me uncomfortable, but now means so much more to me, is when he’s in his living room and he’s throwing things and screaming at his kids — and his wife and children look at him like, ‘Who is this man? Who is this monster?’” Matzen explained. “And that is so reflective of what millions of families faced, looking at these strangers who came back from the war with this rage. Stewart played it beautifully. He just lets it out.”

Stewart recalled a similar moment in the Guideposts interview, when George Bailey turned to God in desperation — completely unaware that his entire town was also praying for him in the same moment.

“In agony I raise my eyes and, following the script, plead, ‘God ... God ... dear Father in heaven, I’m not a praying man, but if you’re up there and you can hear me, show me the way. I’m at the end of my rope. Show me the way, God ...’” Stewart said, adding, “As I said those words, I felt the loneliness, the hopelessness of people who had nowhere to turn, and my eyes filled with tears. I broke down sobbing. This was not planned at all, but the power of that prayer, the realization that our Father in heaven is there to help the hopeless, had reduced me to tears.”

Capra, who loved spontaneity in his films, kept the powerful moment in the final cut — he even sacrificed some of the film quality to turn a wide shot into a close-up so that the audience could better see “George Bailey’s” pain.

The film was a resounding flop when it was released in 1947 — bringing in less than half of the expected box office haul — but still managed to impress the Academy. In addition to two technical nominations, Stewart received another Best Actor nod, Capra was nominated for directing, and the film was nominated for Best Picture. All five lost — and Capra’s newly-formed studio Liberty Films quickly went under.

“By the end of 1947 the film was quietly put on the shelf,” Stewart recalled, adding, “But a curious thing happened. The movie refused to stay on the shelf. Those who loved it loved it a lot, and they told others. They wouldn’t let it die any more than the angel Clarence would let George Bailey die. When it began to be shown on TV, a whole new audience fell in love with it.”

...

Stewart explained that he believed the thing that had truly resonated with the audience was the thing that had resonated with him all those years ago — revealing that of the 80-or-so films he had made in his career, “It’s a Wonderful Life” remained his favorite.

“Today, after some 40 years, I’ve heard the film called an American cultural phenomenon,” Stewart told Guideposts. “Well, maybe so, but it seems to me there is nothing phenomenal about the movie itself. It’s simply about an ordinary man who discovers that living each ordinary day honorably, with faith in God and a selfless concern for others, can make for a truly wonderful life.”

Read and access the full article: https://www.dailywire.com/news/jimmy-stewart-a-world-at-war-and-why-its-a-wonderful-life-was-almost-less-wonderful-part-ii?utm_medium=email&utm_source=cnemail&seyid=41735

Also read and access “Jimmy Stewart, A World At War, And Why ‘It’s A Wonderful Life’ Was Almost Less Wonderful: Part I”: <https://www.dailywire.com/news/jimmy-stewart-a-world-at-war-and-why-its-a-wonderful-life-was-almost-less-wonderful-part-i>

We the People of Interest

Make America Beautiful Again

By Justin Shubow, August 21, 2024 in tomklingenstein.com

Editor’s Note (from tomklingenstein.com)

Our founders looked to the wellspring of classical tradition not just for the forms of their constitution but for the forms of the very buildings they erected. Justin Shubow, president of the National Civic Art Society, suggests that the two are inseparable: that beauty, the proper end of public art, directs us toward the higher ends of politics and of man.



Commonwealth of Virginia State Capitol, Richmond VA, Shutterstock, Photo Contributor Eric Michael Teitelman

As Shubow writes, classical architecture is a tangible illustration of the virtues of our regime, a constant reminder of the history of our Republic and the seriousness of citizenship therein. The defense and promulgation of these symbols, therefore, is vital to countering those who seek to erase that tradition and tear down that regime.

The Victorian art critic John Ruskin thought that “every form of noble architecture is in some sort the embodiment of the Polity, Life, History, and the Religious Faith of nations.” It makes sense, then, that throughout history statesmen and other leaders have concerned themselves with the design of symbolically important edifices. Unsurprisingly, when there exists disagreement about political and cultural values, the choice of architecture of noble buildings — including civic buildings — becomes a contested issue. But the intensity of past debates pales in comparison with the debate over political architecture today.

That tension became evident with President Trump’s Executive Order on Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture, which he promulgated at the end of his term. The directive represented a revolution in federal architecture: it re-oriented government architecture, which had been almost entirely modernist since the 1950s, to classical and traditional design. The order emphasized the importance of beautiful political architecture and required that new designs be admired by the general public. While the order did not ban all modernist architecture, it stated that classical and traditional architecture — defined broadly, to include anything from Greek Revival to Art Deco — was the preferred architecture for federal buildings across the country. For federal buildings in Washington, D.C., that preference for classical architecture was made a requirement.

The order extolled the beauty of classical architecture and noted that it has long inspired ordinary Americans. It also reminded the public that the Founding Fathers “sought to use classical architecture to visually connect our contemporary Republic with the antecedents of democracy in classical antiquity, reminding citizens not only of their rights but also their responsibilities in maintaining and perpetuating its institutions.” Thomas Jefferson, architect of the Virginia Capitol, one of the seminal classical buildings in early America, was inspired by the Maison Carrée, an ancient Roman temple in Nîmes, France. The poet Robert Penn Warren imagined how Jefferson might have described that temple:

. . . a shape that shines, . . .
. . . so wrought and innocent of imprecision
That a man who hoped to be a man, and be free
Might enter in, and all his mind would glow
Like a coal under the breath, in that precinct
Where the correctness of our human aspiration
Has body and abides and bespeaks the charmed space.

In a 1784 letter to a 28-year-old John Trumbull, who would later mature into the lauded “painter of the American Revolution,” Edmund Burke emphasized the precedence of public edifices in a new country: “You belong to a young nation, which will soon want public buildings; these must be erected before the decorations of painting and sculpture will be required. . . . Qualify yourself to superintend their erection. Decorate them also, if you will.”

Like the Virginia Capitol, buildings such as the U.S. Capitol, Treasury Department, and Thurgood Marshall United States Courthouse in New York City demonstrate the exceptional qualities of classical architecture: its beauty, harmony, and timelessness stem from its symmetry, balance, organized complexity, ornament and detailing, capacity for grandeur without arrogance, evocation of order without capital-R Rationalism, and grounding in human proportion and human experience.

Classical architecture is not just about unparalleled aesthetic excellence; it is the architecture of American democracy, the style most associated with our system of government and our highest ideals, the architecture of civic virtue. It is also an architecture conducive to the rootedness of the polis, of the mutual bonds of citizenship extending across generations. In an era of presentism, classical architecture encourages Americans to think in centuries. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan told the Senate in 1983, “We must not preserve buildings out of a fear that we have lost the ability to create things of grace and beauty. . . . I wish to preserve things as an example of what we were and will be, not what we were and no longer can be.”

Classical public buildings make us feel proud of our country; they make us confident in our dignity as citizens of a great Republic. As art historian Vincent Scully said about New York’s original Pennsylvania Station, a Beaux Arts masterpiece inspired by an ancient Roman public bath, “One entered the city like a god.” Modernist architecture diminishes us; it would have us forget the past. Epitomizing Modernism, Brutalist public buildings thunder at us, “Mortal Man, Thou Art Nothing.”

We must preserve classical architecture most of all because it is ours. While there are other noble styles around the world, it is American classicism that is our heritage. It perpetuates and strengthens our wise system of government; unlike in countries such as France, now in its Fourth Republic, America has had only one regime, a single Republic that extends back to the War of Independence. In the face of those who wish to tear down that regime, we must protect and construct edifices that symbolize it.

We must not forget that an everlasting Republic is buttressed by sempiternal beauty. Unlike so many modernist architects, who design and judge buildings according to criteria such as their rectilinearity; exposed structure; frank use of modern materials, especially steel, glass, and reinforced concrete; minimalism; machine aesthetic; functionalism, strikingness of form; sublimity, and repetitive modularity — or even non-aesthetic architectural criteria such as “authenticity,” the “poetics of

tectonics,” and the designer’s intent — classical architects aim for beauty. During the Renaissance, the rediscovery of the architecture of Greco-Roman antiquity, Leon Battista Alberti defined beauty as “that reasoned harmony of all the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse.” More recently, in the Beaux Arts era around the turn of the 19th century, the architect Charles McKim addressed the members of his firm designing the new classical campus of Columbia University: “Young men, the thing of first importance in architecture — is beauty.”

Contrast this foundation with the influential avant-garde architect Peter Eisenman, who said in 2016, “I am not interested in beauty.” Or consider that the Pritzker Prize-winning architect Rem Koolhaas said that his design for the frightening headquarters of CCTV, the official Chinese communist state television channel, “violates some of the most sincerely held convictions about logic and beauty.” Koolhaas has also denigrated architectural beauty and harmony for providing a “false sense of existential security.” For architects such as Eisenman and Koolhaas, a building’s ugliness can be a positive attribute.

It should be no surprise, then, that Trump’s directive was pummeled by the architectural establishment, including the American Institute of Architects, a pro-modernist trade organization that took a political swipe at Trump in 2016 not long after he was elected. Other cultural elites contributed to the pile on. In an editorial titled “What’s So Great About Fake Roman Temples?” the New York Times fulminated, “How can anyone imagine that erecting knockoffs of ancient buildings from other cultures would serve to demonstrate the dignity, enterprise and vigor of our republic?”

There was also a chorus of denunciation from “experts” in academia. Reinhold Martin, a professor of architecture at Columbia University, told the Times, “This is an effort to use culture to send coded messages about white supremacy and political hegemony.” Similarly, Swarthmore art history professor Brian Goldstein tweeted, “this is more red meat in [Trump’s] ever widening culture war. It’s advancing an idea of the U.S. in the tradition of Western Civilization against all those weird ideas of modernism. It’s about whiteness.” Samia Henni, an architecture professor at Cornell, declared:

Imported by Europeans from Western Europe, [classical architecture] testifies to a colonial presence in a colonized territory. In addition to fortifying conservatism and Eurocentrism incarnate in U.S.-centrism, and undermining design freedom and contemporaneity, the order eulogizes the massacres of Native Americans, enslaved African people, and other oppressed communities to ultimately reinforce white supremacy.

Predictably, establishment architecture critics have also howled about the supposed reactionary politics of classicism. Robert Bevan, for instance, wrote in *Dezeen*, “with honourable exceptions, traditional architecture has become part of the war of position, to use Antonio Gramsci’s term, for the right and far-right who are using it to open a new front in the culture wars that is hostile to difference and the cosmopolitan.”

While there have been numerous calls for tearing down statues said to embody white supremacy — and in 2021 a statue of Thomas Jefferson was actually removed from New York City Hall by the metropolis’s Public Design Commission — so far I have not heard any calls to demolish existing “white supremacist” classical buildings, which would presumably include the Jefferson Memorial and U.S. Supreme Court. Time will tell.

In any event, if support for classical architecture is a dog whistle for white supremacy, it’s hard to understand why a majority of black Americans prefer classical and traditional architecture for federal buildings and U.S. courthouses, as found in a 2020 survey performed by the Harris Poll for the National Civic Art Society. The survey found a wide preference for classical and traditional design across all demographic groups, including education level, socioeconomic status, and political party affiliation (72% of Republicans, 70% of Democrats).

Either unaware of such (unsurprising) facts or in defiance of them, soon after taking office, President Biden rescinded Trump’s Order without providing any explanation. Trump’s directive has had lingering effects, however. Last year, bicameral legislation that would codify Trump’s executive order — the Beautifying Federal Civic Architecture Act — was introduced in Congress by Rep. Jim Banks (R-IN) and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL). So far, the Senate co-sponsors include J.D. Vance (R-OH), Bill Hagerty (R-TN), and Mike Lee (R-UT). Vance, now Trump’s running mate, tweeted in 2022, “Our towns and cities don’t have to be ugly. We used to create small businesses that last and beautiful public buildings.”

The Republican Party itself has taken a stance on the issue. Under the heading “Restore American Beauty,” the 2024 GOP platform pledges that “Republicans will promote beauty in Public Architecture. ... We will build cherished symbols of our Nation....” The platform also commits Republicans to making Washington, D.C. the “most beautiful capital city.” Though elites trained in an anti-tradition strain to force the modernist project on our federal façade, Trump’s directive and the platform offer hope of a return to an architecture that is distinctly American in both style and spirit.

It remains to be seen what will happen in Congress or the White House — or even state government — but public architecture is now in play politically, and American democracy should be a beautiful thing.

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