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WHAT DO AMERICANS THINK ABOUT THE HEALTH OF OUR DEMOCRACY  
AND THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION?

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**GALSTON:** Well, this is a great turnout. Thanks so much for coming. Let me begin by introducing myself. I'm Bill Galston, a senior fellow here at Brookings, and on behalf of the program in which I work, Governance Studies, and the entire institution, I want to welcome you to the 14th annual edition of the American Values Survey. This has been an extraordinary partnership between PRRI and Brookings, and I want to extend my thanks to Robert Jones and the entire PRRI team for allowing us to be part of this fascinating project from its inception up to the present day. It has been an intellectual feast for E.J. and me, and it has also, I think, been of great benefit to the country.

What is so special about the American Values Survey? Well, I suspect that most of you in this room are consumers of polls and surveys. Many of them deal with horse race questions. Who's up? Who's down? Many of them deal with policy questions. You know, how many people are in favor of a 15-week ban on abortion, and how many oppose it? But the AVS is something completely different. You know, it goes beneath the horse race and the policy questions to ask fundamental questions about our culture, about our religious views, about the basic principles and, yes, passions that we Americans bring to politics. And it illuminates dark spaces, and there are many of them.

Before I turn to the next phase of this program, let me remind you all to silence everything you may be carrying that could conceivably make a noise. If anybody brought a Whoopee cushion, please don't sit on it. Yeah, turn off your pacemakers. Let's see what happens. You'll hear a bit more from me at the end. But in the meantime, we are about two minutes away from an extraordinary, typically extraordinary, whiz-bang presentation by Robert Jones, the president, the elevated president, of the PRRI, followed by an extraordinary set of panelists. I can't wait to hear what they have to say about all this. But to, you know, to balance the scales and to welcome you all on behalf of the Public Religion Research Institute, it's now my pleasure to ask to invite Melissa Deckman, the CEO of PRRI, to the podium. Thanks so much.

**DECKMAN:** Thank you, Bill. Good morning, everyone. Okay, that's good, that's good. Welcome to the release of the 14th Annual American Value Survey. And I'm here to welcome you on behalf of PRRI, which really, since 2009, has been, I would argue, the leading nonpartisan, nonprofit, and independent research organization examining the intersection of religion, culture, and politics. PRRI's first and longest-standing relationship organizational partnership is with E.J. Dionne, Bill Galston, and the Governance Studies program here at Brookings. I'd argue it's probably our most fun relationship as well. We're grateful to E.J., to Bill, the entire staff here for helping us pull off this event at Brookings, especially Catalina Navarro, who is the senior events manager at the Governance Studies program. She makes the trains run on time. We're very grateful for her. And for those of you who are watching live on our live stream, you can find a copy of the full AVS report at [www.ppri.org](http://www.ppri.org). You can also sign up for our regular news summaries, including

the Morning Buzz. We invite you to follow us for more commentary about the AVS at Twitter or X, on Facebook, and on Instagram @PRRIPoll. And please use the hashtag AVS2023 to follow specific commentary about today's research. I'd also like to acknowledge the excellent work done by our staff at PRRI, including Dr. Diana Orcés, Ian Huff, Maddie Snodgrass, Jack Shanley. We relied on the assistance of three very talented interns who helped us with the crucial work of number checking Emily Thompson, Maddie McAlexander, and Sarah Vogel. Our comms team, Colleen Ross, Jessica Royce, and Belén Bonilla have done stellar work in helping us prepare this report and promoting it. And I also want to thank Toni Baptiste, our operations and people associate. And last but certainly not least, the world's best chief of staff, Sean Sands, who keeps us on schedule and mostly under budget, mostly.

It is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Robert P. Jones. Robby is the president and founder of PRRI, previously serving as CEO from the organization's inception in 2009 through last July. He's the award-winning author of "White to Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity," which won a 2021 American Book Award, and "The End of White Christian America," which won the 2019 Grawemeyer Award in religion. His most recent book, released just last month, is "The Hidden Roots of White Supremacy: And the Path to a Shared American Future," and is a New York Times bestseller. He writes regularly about religion, racial justice, and politics on his White Too Long substack. Robby holds a Ph.D. in religion from Emory, M. Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a B.S. in Computing Science and Mathematics from Mississippi College. It's my pleasure to introduce the gentleman from Mississippi, he was also is running for speaker actually — I don't know if you knew it, but put in a plug for him — so, Robby.

**JONES:** Well, thank you. Glad to see you all here, and in an actual room and not on Zoom. I'm still happy about that. I know it's been a while, but I'm still happy to see real people in real rooms talking about important issues. So, you know the title —here, I'll just start with that — "Threats to American Democracy Ahead of an Unprecedented Presidential Election." So this gives you some hint of the mood of the, of the data that we found, the findings in the survey that I'm going to step through. But I do think it's important to say just the fact that one of the things we're finding is that the political temperature in America is hot and it's running high. That was so evident throughout throughout the survey. And we're looking ahead to what is really an unprecedented presidential election in a number of ways, right? We have two very unpopular candidates, two the oldest candidates running for president. And we are following-- the first time we did not have a peaceful transfer of power in our last presidential election. I think the reverberations of that are still with us today and that we're seeing that through some of the, some of the numbers.

So I'm going to do my 30,000-foot flyover of the data here. You've got most of this in the chart. It's digested here in the presentation and then we'll have a great panel discussion with it. Let me tell you, first of

all, this study was conducted at the end of August, so keep that in mind. A lot has happened since the end of August, but that's when the survey was conducted. It's among a little over 2,500 Americans in a random probability survey. The margin of error is plus or minus two percentage points and some change. We do want to thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York. We had additional funding from the Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, and the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock. So thank you to all of our funders who made this survey possible.

So the state of the country — I said I would just go ahead and cue you in here — pessimism, political violence, paranoia, right? If I were a preacher, I'd have three good alliterative points here. So let's get a start with the public really does see that there's a lot at stake in the 2024 election. We have this question. "The future of American democracy is at stake in the 2024 presidential election." Three-quarters of Americans agree with that statement. It is one of the few things in the survey that all partisans agree on, right? Republicans, Independents, Democrats all overwhelmingly saying the future of democracy is at stake in the 2024 presidential election. We've been asking a question about how the country has changed since the 1950s here for a number of years. I think in 2015 we first started asking this question. It has been fairly steady over that time. And I'm pairing this question here with another question, another kind of pessimism question, "America's best days are now behind us?" A little gloomier version of that question. So since the 1950s, American culture and way of life has changed mostly for the worse. This is where Americans are, right, all Americans on those questions. So fairly pessimistic on that question.

But there are ginormous partisan divides on these, on both of these questions. As you can see, Republicans, three-quarters, say since the 1950s, American culture and way of life has changed for the worse. That's more than twice the number of Democrats who say that. And you can see the same patterns really on both of these questions, even the more gloomier one here. White evangelical Protestants — Republicans, overwhelmingly — the two groups that stick out, saying that since the 1950s, American culture and way of life is mostly change for the worse. Generally speaking, we'll find this, we have white Christian groups at the top here, evangelicals, even mainline non-evangelical Protestants and white Catholics are more likely to sort of have the pessimistic view, particularly about how the country has changed since the 1950s.

The other, I think, main finding that we had, and one of the ones that has, I think, grabbed me is perhaps the most disturbing finding in the country is that we find considerable support for the idea that true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save the country because things have become-- gotten so far off track. So these are the numbers that-- so we first asked this question in 2021, right? It was 15% of the country, but it was 20%, nearly three in ten Republicans, only 7% of Democrats said that. We

found that this attitude has actually gone up over the last two years, right? So in the country, it's now a quarter of Americans, 23%, who say that true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save the country. It has gone to fully a third of Republicans. It's gone up across the board. Democrats has gone up six points as well to 13%. But it's still two and a half times, republicans are two and a half times more likely to say this than are Democrats. Among religious groups, we see a similar uptick across the board, but a more pronounced uptake among white evangelical Protestants. Most other religious groups are about at the national average, around 23%, but white evangelicals tick up. Notably here, Catholics are a little bit under, both white Catholics and Latino Catholics are a little bit under the national average, not by, not by a lot, but it's white evangelicals that are jumping out as the most likely to hold this view.

So in unpacking this view, we also looked at one of the high-- some of the higher correlational attitudes that correlate with this belief that we may have to resort to violence in order to save the country. So again, a quarter, a quarter of Americans here, the highest thing is actually support for holding a favorable view of Trump, or most likely the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump. Forty-six percent, nearly half of that group-- if you believe that the 2020 election was stolen, nearly half say true American patriots may have to resort to violence. Another attitude, again, about four in ten, if you believe in the so-called "great replacement theory" that's making the rounds on kind of conservative right-wing media — and we asked this thought we operationalize this in the survey with this question — Immigrants are invading our country and replacing our cultural and ethnic background. If you agree with that, four in ten of that group is likely to say, say that true American patriots now have to resort to violence.

A question we have that measures the attitude around white Christian nationalism, "If you agree that God intended America to be a new promised land for European Christians," four in ten of that group say that we may have to resort to violence or to save the country. "If you hold patriarchal views, society as a whole has become too soft and feminine" — we've been asking this question for quite a while, a very predictive question about vote and other attitudes — again, nearly four in ten. And finally, if—they say denial of systemic racism, "If you believe that the recent killings of black Americans by police are isolated incidents rather than part of a pattern of how police treat African Americans," three in ten of that group says that they believe that true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save the country.

So to kind of like recap, the kind of positive correlations here are the big lie, favorable views of Trump, "great replacement theory," white Christian nationalism, patriarchy, and denials of systemic racism, right? Those are the things that are connected most closely and positively to this idea that true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save the country. It also gives you some clue about what "save the country" means, right, in these, in these questions.

The other, I think, kind of disturbing thing we found is actually a rise in the number of Americans who believe in QAnon, right, who hold these QAnon beliefs. Now, we've measured this since 2021 at PRRI. We've operationalized it with three questions, and they are-- one of these questions, or actually two of them, are ones I never really thought as a sociologist I would write as a question. We actually asked Americans whether they believe that the government and business elites are controlled by a group of Satan-worshipping pedophiles that are involved in a sex trafficking operation, right? And we asked that question, right, and asked Americans they agree or disagree with that question. The other question was kind of an apocalyptic question, that QAnon has this belief that there is a storm coming that's going to sweep away the current leadership and install the rightful leaders. Again, this sounds familiar, I guess you borrow some Christian theology, this kind of apocalyptic view. And then the other measure that's baked in here is the measure on violence as well, this idea that true American patriots may have to save the country.

So this is the doubters' line I'm kind of starting with here. It's remained fairly steady, actually. The people who mostly doubt that's true, they don't completely disagree with all three of those statements, but they mostly disagree with them. But here are the number of Americans who agree with all of those statements, right, has gone from 14% when we first measured it, to 23% in the last couple of years. And here are the number of people who disagree with all of those statements, right? It's gone from 40% down to 29% over the last couple of years. So it's actually gaining some traction. This kind of QAnon conspiracy theory in the, in the American public, it is more likely — I was going to put [inaudible] up here — It is more likely to be-- these views, to hold, among Republicans. In fact, they're twice as likely as Democrats to hold these views. Democrats are more than three-- are three times as likely to reject those views than Republicans are. You can kind of see those numbers here. So, again, it's more operational among Republicans, among political conservatives in the country.

Another place where you can see just the absolute polarization in the country is if we look at what issues partisans say are important. And in this survey, we asked 20 issues, right? And just said, "Rate them. Are they critical issues or not, or not to you?" And what I've got on this slide are the, are the issues out of that 20 that Democrats-- that half or more Democrats said were critical issues to them. You can see it's actually quite a range of things. There's climate change, access to guns and gun safety, health care, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, and abortion at about half. So it ranges from, you know, two-thirds up around climate change down to half of Democrats saying that abortion is a critical issue. But watch what happens when I put up the number of Republicans who agree with these issues as critical issues, right? There, there's-- the only place where there's agreement is increasing costs of housing and everyday expenses, right? So kind of day-to-day costs in the economy is the only place that we see agreement here. It's also

notable, and we'll come back to this in a minute, that on abortion, Democrats are far more likely today to rate this issue as critical than Republicans. And that's new post the Dobbs decision, right? It used to be the other way around. We used to always see Republicans rating that issue more highly than the Democrats. But since Dobbs, we've been seeing it flipped the other way.

I'm going to do the same exercise here with Republicans. Here are the things that Republicans say. These are the only things out of 20 issues where anywhere near like half or more Republicans say are critical issues. So again, costs of housing and everyday expenses, the only thing that's on both lists. But what children learn in public schools, crime, immigration, human trafficking — and here's where Democrats are right on those issues. Again, agree on the cost of housing, come close on crime and human trafficking, but very different on immigration, what children learn in public school. But if you kind of put these [inaudible] things together, the Democratic list was far-- like, very diverse, kind of over the map that this if you kind of look at what holds these things together other than the economic thing, is a kind of fear, protection, those kinds of motifs, right? Protection from without, protection from danger within, what children are being taught in school, immigration, crime. It's around a kind of fearfulness and protection ideas that are that are really animating Republicans in the country today.

This is also notable. We had a question we asked, basically a litmus test question: "Would you only vote for a candidate if they shared your views on these-- this number of issues?" Now, most-- for the most part, Americans aren't litmus test voters, despite what many politicians want to think. They tend to vote in more complex ways than that. But so anything is sort of high on here is actually quite notable. Again, echoing what I showed before, today we have half of Democrats saying they would not vote for a candidate who did not share their views on abortion. Again, it's much higher than the number of Republicans saying that. So I'll kind of bake that in, right, because I think there is the sense that Republicans are single-issue voters on this issue, and it's just not true, alright?

So this is what Republicans are are telling us here. They're actually more likely to say access to guns is something that they would only vote for a candidate if they shared their views. You see the big difference on climate change here. About four in ten Democrats saying they would not vote for a candidate who doesn't share their views on climate change, very similar numbers on LGBTQ rights, and here's immigration, right? So for Democrats, it really is access to guns and abortion, kind of up around half. And for Republicans, the top two are access to guns, but in a very different way, and immigration down here driving-- saying they would only vote for a candidate. But I think this abortion finding is the one to kind of hang on to for future analysis. So the candidates.

We had a new question we asked this year about whether-- what people are looking for in a presidential candidate. And we-- the way we put it, "Are you looking for a candidate who's better at managing the economy or who can best protect and preserve American culture and American way of life?" So here's where all Americans are, slightly leaning more toward the economy. But big differences among Partisans, right? So, Democrats, much more likely to say, looking for a president to manage the economy. Republicans much more likely to say, "Looking for a president who would protect and preserve American culture and American way of life." Religious groups sort of-- particularly, most of the way you would see them-- the one and one thing to note down here is African American Protestants are actually much more divided than one might think on this question so-- and actually have a 52% slight majority saying that they want a president who protect and preserve American culture and way of life. My best guess is that they mean something very different than the white evangelical sitting next to them in this chart who want to preserve American culture and way of life. We can kind of pick this back up in the discussion. Favorability of candidates, I mentioned this, so Biden is — and again, end of August— but Biden's favorability, 37%. That is the lowest we've found it since we've been tracking this among Biden's favorability. But look at everybody else, right? This is where they were at the end of August. There's really no candidate jumping out. Those are the unfavorable on the other side, Biden does, you know, much better on the unfavorable than Trump. But it's not a popular field anywhere right here, which is worth, I think, noting.

One other thing that I think the survey showed us, we asked about-- among Biden supporters we and among Trump supporters, we asked if there's anything that the candidate could do that might lose-- cause them to lose their support. So among Biden supporters, 59% said, "Yeah, there's something he could do." But 39%, four in ten, said, "Yeah, there's virtually nothing he can do. I'm locked in. Virtually nothing Biden could do to lose my support." Here's the equivalent numbers for Trump. Among Trump supporters, it's 45% who's-- who are locked in, saying, "There's virtually nothing he could do to lose my support." So, again, this is among-- this kind of firmness of support among their supporters. So Trump actually has an advantage here among his own supporters of people saying, you know, there's virtually nothing he could do to lose my support.

We did ask about Trump's alleged criminal conduct. Among all Americans, it's six in ten who both agree there's credible evidence that Donald Trump committed serious federal crimes, and it's likely that former President Trump broke the law to try to stay in power. However, look at the partisan divides on this number, right? It's really only about a quarter of Republicans who believe either one of these statements. And then also, we've been asking for a while at PRRI about which television news outlet you most trust here, and you can see the way that particularly Fox News and far-right news outlets like One America News,



Newsmax, and people actually to the right of Fox are shaping, you know, these views. Like, it just drops off a cliff among the kind of far-right news, like One America News or Newsmax. And among Fox News, it looks basically like Republicans here. But really, people who don't watch television news or any other television news source have very different views, right, on whether or not Trump committed serious crimes. We asked about a two-way vote and let me show it to you by religion. One of the most remarkable things here is that this looks very, very similar to the exit polls. There's very little movement here [inaudible].

The one place I would, I would point to that has a little bit of a shift is among African American Protestants. We're seeing a little bit of weakness here. It was less than one in ten African American Protestants that voted for Trump, and we're measuring 16 here. What it looks like when you compare it to the exit polls is that most of the people who are out here saying, "I don't know," or they skipped the question, it looks like in the last election, most of these people went to the majority there, right? So this is the typical pattern, three-quarters, eight in ten white evangelicals supporting Trump. But also, it's worth remembering, because I think people forget the other two big groups of white Christians also vote for Trump. Six in ten white mainline Protestants, six in ten white Catholics. That's right where we are. So, really not much movement at all, with that one caveat of that 16% among African American Protestants may look a little bit high. Again, it's a long way out, but it's, it's, to me, it's the stability is what's remarkable, given everything that's happened since the last election.

Along those lines, we asked about whether people thought whether the election of Biden or Trump means that democracy is broken. In other words, "If this other candidate wins, it means the democracy is broken. We may need to look for a different form of government." So we tried to ask it in a very strong way. It looks about 45% of all Americans say if Trump wins the election, it means democracy is broken, and 38% say that about Joe Biden. Partisans, not unpredictably, have very different views of this. And then also, here are the numbers among religious groups. You'll see kind of down below, the kind of white Christian groups down below, the least likely groups to say that "If Donald Trump is elected, we may need-- that means democracy is broken." But kind of remarkably, numbers of both, right, saying that if that candidate is elected, it means that democracy is broken.

So I'm going to do a quick run-through of just a couple of other findings to set the table, and then I will turn it over to our panelists. This one, I think, is a measure of economic pessimism. I sometimes think about this as kind of a proxy for the American dream, because part of that is the idea that if you follow the rules, you get a good college education, you'll get ahead, right? This, this is kind of the upward mobility story that education has played in this idea of the American dream. Americans are becoming less and less convinced that that's true, right? So, this is college education. And rather than-- this question asked whether

a college education is a good investment in the future or whether it's a risky gamble that may not pay off. These are the numbers of people saying that it's a risky gamble that may not pay off. Most of this occurred during the Trump presidency, right? This kind of upward tick of people saying it's a risky gamble. But it's gone up across the board, right? It's not just Republicans, it's Republicans and Democrats thinking this. Republicans more likely than Democrats, but it's gone up kind of across the board. It's got economic pessimism.

The other one is one we ask because we've seen this kind of on the Texas border in particular, this-- installing these kinds of dangerous deterrents, like things like floating barriers in rivers that may drown people, razor wire to prevent immigrants entering the country illegally. And we even added this phrase, "Even if they endanger or kill people, do you favor putting up these barriers?" Most Americans do not, but it's 44% who say they do favor these variables. But that is a partisan gap on this. It's nearly 60 points on this question, right? Nearly eight in ten Republicans saying, "Yes, I favor these deterrents even if they endanger or kill people." And speaking of someone who writes a lot about white Christianity, I would say, like, this is maybe the most heartbreaking finding in the survey for me as someone writes about this group. White evangelicals — it's really white Christians, right — who are the most likely to say, "Yes, we favor these kinds of barriers, even if they endanger or kill people to keep immigrants from entering the country illegally."

So, I'm not going to completely stop on a negative note here, but one kind of ambiguity that we're finding in the survey-- there's been a lot of talk and debate and kind of noise around transgender people and the rights of transgender people in the country. It turns out there is a lot of confusion about this. We have two different questions. In both of them, we had a majority saying that they agreed to them, and they're opposite questions. So, "People advocating for the rights of transgender people have gone too far in recent years," and "Restricting the rights of transgender people is just another form of discrimination." Majorities of Americans agree with both of those statements, right, at the same time. So I think that's important to kind of hang on to. You can see that the patterns are what you would think they are in terms of partisanship. But even among Republicans, for example, 85% say advocates have gone too far. But, 43% of Republicans also say that restricting the rights of transgender people is just another form of discrimination. I've seen similar patterns among religious groups. And the most consistent groups, which I think tells you something, are among kind of consumers of different media, right? That's where you see the most consistent messages here. And particularly among kind of far-right newsgroups, there's the least amount of overlap there where I think they're getting one message and one message only in those media.

So I promised not to leave you too much in doom and gloom, there are a couple of places here — I'm gonna end on this — there is very little support for banning a whole variety of things in public schools,

right? We're hearing a lot of that from the local level, state level in the country. But we asked about banning the discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity, banning social and emotional learning programs, banning high school courses like AP African American history, and banning books depicting slavery. Again, none of those comes anywhere near reaching majority support. There is majority support among Republicans for banning the discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in schools, but independents are not there, and Democrats are not, Democrats are not there as well. I mean, the numbers here-- again, you know, this is 50 percentage points between Republicans and Democrats on this, on this issue.

And then finally, I think maybe one of the most heartening findings in the survey is there's great confidence, actually, about what the curriculum in public schools. Again, this is something we hear a lot of controversy about. But we asked two options: should we teach-- "Which one do you agree with more? 'We should teach our children both the good and the bad aspects of our history so they can learn from the past,' or 'We should not teach children history that should make them feel uncomfortable or guilty about what their ancestors did in the past.'" That's right out of those critical race theory bills, right, that language there. Four percent agreed with that second part of the part of the statement, right? Ninety-four percent agreed with the first one. Different question, but similar findings: "Public school teachers and librarians are professionals whom we should trust to provide our kids with appropriate curriculum and books that teach the good and the bad of American history," or "Public school teachers and librarians should not be allowed to develop curriculum and teach books that wrongly portray America as a racist country." Again, 22% of the country believes that. But overwhelmingly, three-quarters of the country says, "Public school teachers and librarians are professionals we should trust to teach, teach our kids appropriately." So on that note, I'm going to stop and invite the panel to come up and join us.

**DIONNE:** I wait for Robby's incredible slide presentation every year, and he never disappoints. Thank you, Robby. And I'm really honored to celebrate the 14th year of this partnership. I was thinking about why are our findings so kind of techy and difficult this year, And I realized this partnership is entering its adolescence. And so, if we can get through the next five, six years, we will finally produce really happy findings for everyone in the world. I do want to thank Robby and Melissa, and Bill, and Max, and Catalina. We've got-- we work-- we've really been blessed to work with great people. And we also have an awesome panel here to respond to these findings. Historically, in our adolescent partnership, we've just had-- our respondents have added enormously to our understanding of the findings, and we're really grateful that they-- I know that they're going to do so again this year.

To my immediate left, Joy Reid, the host of The ReidOut on MSNBC at 7 p.m. every week during the week. And it's great to have Joy back, who is one of the earliest respondents to our findings. Lilliana Mason is an extraordinary scholar--. Well, actually, I've got Russell Contreras. Let me go to Russell. He is the senior race and justice reporter at Axios and has done extraordinary work, and we're really honored to have you here today. And then Lilliana Mason, who is an associate professor of political science and also a researcher at the Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins. She's, she's particularly qualified to answer today because she's done extraordinary work on violence, on polarization. She has also come and visited with my students in the past and they loved her, and you will too.

So let's start with Joy. We're gonna go through the panel. Robby will respond to them. I'll ask a few questions. I'm also just going to-- we got a lot of really good questions online. I cannot ask them all. At some point, I'm going to read off a bunch of them to see if anyone wants to respond to any of them in particular. And we will, of course, eventually go to the audience as well. I'd like to ask if anybody is from the media here, since they're the folks who are going to have to write about and make sense of this poll, please identify yourself early on and we'll be happy to turn to you early. But you don't have to be in the media to ask a question. So without further ado, Joy, welcome. Great to have you back.

**REID:** Thank you very much, E.J. It's great to be reunited with this, with this crew. Melissa, Bill, Catalina, thank you all very much for having me. It's always fun, fun being here. It's been a while since I've done this. And so it's, on our show, our subtitle is "Scaring is Caring." So thank you, Robby. Bad news is helpful. It's good, bad news is good. As I listened to the presentation, as I read through it earlier, the question that I asked myself is, "Violence for what? Violence to what end?" Right? If you have a third of Republicans saying that we may need to resort to violence and then you marry that to the idea that America's best days are behind and that we need to restore the country culturally, it does bring to mind the sort of leading question of what people think we need violence for. It sounds like if you put together what's happening in the news cycle, violence to install the leader of Republicans preference, which would be Donald Trump, which is what he wants. And so I feel like we are in a really perilous stage in this country, except for people's love of librarians and teachers — which thank God for that because [inaudible] at the end — but people do not have confidence in democracy as a way to solve their fundamental concerns. And for Democrats, as you can see from the survey, the fundamental concerns are things like wealth inequality, climate change, economic issues. Those are the concerns. For Republicans, the concerns seem to be very strictly cultural, and the thing they want to restore is cultural— a sort of retrograde kind of culture that you can't get back. And so we're at a fundamental problem where one party is-- has concerns that are fundamentally political, things

that politics can solve, and the other party has concerns that are ephemeral and that are emotional, which politics actually can't solve.

And I will just say that what this brought me back to, the survey results brought me back to, is something that I think is true, is that the three kinds of curr-- the three kind of modern-day flashpoints in our society, in our culture, are the election and reelection of Barack Obama, which was a cultural hurricane for particularly white voters, six in ten of whom voted for the other two guys, the other Republicans. And their will was subsumed by this combination of voters of color, and younger voters, and college-educated white voters. And so you had a 60% of white Americans overruled twice by 10 million votes and then by five million votes by the election of the first black president. To me, that was a huge flash point that produced Trump. The second flash point being Trump's and-- his presidency itself, which was kind of a, kind of a ritualistic four years of attacking the culture that Obama represented. And then his failure to turn over power peacefully, the peaceful transition of power, which, by the way, kind of is an American tradition — Wilmington, North Carolina, you know, the Civil War —Like, it's not like America hasn't tried to not have peaceful transfers of power before, it's kind of part of our cultural history, but it's the first time it happened in the capital. So that's the second flash point.

And the third, I'd, I would say, would be COVID, which is when, in a lot of ways, America went mad. People sat home doomscrolling. I think part of the QAnon growth was because of that sense of paranoia about political power and what politics could force you to do, about governmental control, and just a raw paranoia that Trump and others sort of-- and social media played into. So I think those three flashpoints, to me, are borne out in this poll. And it leaves me quite pessimistic, actually, about our democracy. So that's my good news report of the day.

**DIONNE:** Yep, and now for a descent on different, on different bad news. Go ahead, Russell.

**CONTRERAS:** Yeah. So I was in New Mexico yesterday at the airport, and I was reading over the report just to make sure that I had all my stats in order. And I got a call from one of my friends, an indigenous brother from Gallup, New Mexico, who's Navajo, and I was just saying, "This is a-- I'm reading this report. It's terrible because it's saying that the rise-- there's a rise in people endorsing-- who could endorse violence if they don't agree with some of the political outcomes. Can you believe this? That people would want to wipe out other people?" And without missing a beat, my indigenous friends said, "No, I've never heard that story before. It just passed my mind." So I-- and then I started thinking about it because we've seen this before. If you think of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Rosewood, Florida; [inaudible], Texas; Wounded Knee, South Dakota— that whenever the country sees any sort of demographic change, threats, especially from people of color, violence will occur, and they'll be wiped off the face of the earth. So this is why its kind of resonated with me

when I saw this, that this is a story that's rhyming with the past. The difference is we don't have just one Ida B. Wells, we have many now. We can document it. So on that front, I'm hopeful. When I saw this and I saw that there's a rise of violence and I see there's also anxiety about demographic change, what I see is the last grasps of power — which Rob has talked about this in his recent book, which I highly recommend that you will go out and get — is that this country, for years, has been a haven for European white Christians. And the belief that that is slipping away, that it's being redefined, people were acting the way they are violently. That's one of the things that stood up.

The other was the idea of this once-fringe belief of white replacement theory. It's now supported by 40-- around 40% of Americans. This is a conspiracy theory that supposes that people of color are conspiring with this wide elaborate plan to replace white people. I can assure you-- Joy and I are members of the National Association of Black Journalists. We go to the conference every year. If we're not on panels, eating, or dancing, we're fighting. We're fighting constantly, and usually that evening, about what to have the dinner or where to have the convention next time. So this theory supposes that we, who can't even get together on the same page on a Cookout, we're going to somehow conspire to replace white people. And it's being repeated over and over now on mainstream cable opinion channels that we're coming out and we're going to replace you in the political space, the economic space, the baseball team — well, we're doing that. That's, that's obvious — but there's this anxiety, and therefore some sort of violence is going to be needed. This is something that has resonated me, and this is something that I see.

And I think one of the things we're missing is the idea that history continues to be taught and viewed by some as a tool to reinforce nationalism coming out of the Cold War. And yes, I did see the results that say, "No, we need to start teaching the-- both the good and bad about history." That seems to be a very good telling point because if I came in here and I saw Joy and I immediately like her shoes, "You're promoting me. This guy's great. He's going to crack a few jokes. He's good to hear." But if I saw Joy and I didn't like her shoes and I pushed her and she happened to break her leg, you would counsel me right away and say, "This person's a bad person." However, we can't do that in history. We have documented evidence that some of our founders owned and traded human beings. We have evidence that some of these same people removed and killed other people off their lands. And yet it's been difficult for us to even get people to acknowledge that that happened. That George Washington, according to Erica Dunbar's book, went and tried to retrieve his property, who left when he was president. And to bring it up is somehow woke? No, that's facts. And so, now, we're at a time, we're at a point where we need to embrace those facts. Democracy thrives on information. And if we don't have the right information, like the stock market, you're going to invest in something that's going to decline.

**DIONNE:** Thank you, thank you for that. Lilliana?

**MASON:** Yeah, Thank you. Thanks for inviting me to this. This is very fascinating data. So those violence numbers were a real gut punch, I think, for most people. The-- one of the things that I've been doing since 2017 is measuring American attitudes toward political violence. So we have some sense of, you know, a trend across time. These are much higher than most of what we've seen. But I also want to urge caution in interpreting those exact numbers, partly because — this is getting into the weeds here — but the phrase "true patriots" is more likely to be embraced by Republicans. So, we're worried about two things. We're worried about the difference between Partisans and the amount of violence that they endorse, and we're also worried about the change over time. So in the difference between Partisans, I do think that it's possible that the levels among Republicans are slightly inflated because this is a QAnon belief. It's a QAnon belief and it's also something that Republicans are kind of taken the mantle of calling themselves true Americans, Patriots. And Democrats also know this, and they can they often shy away from that phrase.

So I'm weirdly urging just calm down a little bit. It's not fine, but it is important to to remember that these numbers are-- they can also be context-dependent. So one thing that we did in a lot of our research was to say-- you know, our question was, "To what extent do you think it's acceptable to use violence to achieve your political goals?" And those numbers have gradually increased among both Democrats and Republicans over, over even the 2017 to 2022 data that we had. But then if we ask a follow-up question on, "What, what did you mean when you said violence?" And often what we hear from that is that, first of all, Democrats and Republicans are quite different on what they meant to begin with. Democrats are much bigger fans of property damage. Republicans generally are more likely to be thinking about armed, armed resistance. And-- but, but across both, if we say, "Were you thinking about killing people?" only like 20% of the people who said violence was okay were willing to say it's okay to kill people, right? So not everyone there is thinking, "I want to murder other people." So that's good. I'm trying to find a silver lining.

The other reason I want to urge caution, though, is because one thing that political scientists have found over and over again is that when we perceive the other side to be violent, we become more accepting of violence ourselves. And, and in addition, most Democrats and Republicans believe that the other side is more violent than they actually are. And when you correct their understanding, they become less approving of violence themselves. So to the extent that we are interpreting these data, it's important to remember that we're also communicating a message to voters about how violent their political opponents are. And it's important for us to understand that when we do that, we may be fostering a sense of increasing violence among partisans themselves. So that's another reason to be cautious.

I'll just end with something less in the weeds, which is that the one-- another thing that we've looked at is interventions that can maybe bring these attitudes down so things that can make people approve of violence less. And, and one of the things we tested was messages from leaders. So, very simple, just like one sentence from from Donald Trump or Joe Biden saying, " Violence is not acceptable, it should not be part of our politics." And reading that just one sentence made people step back. So our leaders are extraordinarily influential. Also asking people to think about the people who kind of structured their sense of being a member of a society — so teachers, coaches — when we ask them to think about that person, after they think about it, they're less approving of violence.

So even just creating, kind of inculcating the sense of, "Who am I in a society? What do we owe each other? How do I interact with other human beings?" That also reduces people's approval of violence. The reason we've seen an uptick, I think, in approval of violence over these few years is actually because our leaders have stopped saying that and our social sort of civic leaders have also not been saying it clearly enough. And so one very easy thing for us to do — not easy but concrete thing for us to do — is to try to encourage our leaders to make it very, very clear to their supporters and to people who trust them and follow them that these types of attitudes do not have a place in a healthy democracy. And this is not something that we should be accepting on the whole.

**DIONNE:** Thank you so much. I wonder, just out of curiosity, I was struck by the media differences in this survey, which I want to get to. Some leaders are saying more than others, no? Lilliana [inaudible]--.

**MASON:** Right, yeah. And part of the reason we see the partisan difference is that Republican leaders are not condemning violence, in particular Donald Trump, but also other leaders who, you know, when some-- when somebody says something violent, everyone-- it's crickets among the Republican Party usually. So, the-- it's not even a, it's not even like they're saying pro-violent things, they're just not saying anything when there is violence. And I would also argue that the media are leaders-- right-wing media are opinion leaders, especially in the Republican Party. And when those media leaders don't express this resistance to violence, their supporters are ready to go along with it.

**DIONNE:** Thank you. I want-- Robby, I want you to respond, and I'll try to put your response into context because one of the most striking things about this survey is that both sides say democracy is in danger, but from a completely different set of assumptions. That's sort of Division one. Division two is a lot of times elections are debates over how to solve particular problems. People agree on the problems, but they have different solutions, and then they argue about their solutions. What's so striking here is we're having elections in two different countries. In terms of the issue list, I don't know how many of you-- if any of you are sports fans and watch television in this area, there are a ton of ads from the legislative races in Virginia that



are coming up in November. If you watch those ads, there are only two issues. It's either 'abortion' and 'MAGA' in the Democratic ads or 'crime' and 'defund the police' in the Republican ads. They are just astonishingly different. So to reflect on this, because I think, you know, bringing us, ourselves, together when we've disagreed about solutions to common problems is quite different from having utterly different agendas and utterly different definitions of the word 'democracy.'

**JONES:** Yeah. Well, thanks for that easy question--.

**DIONNE:** [Inaudible] really smart guy. You have all these degrees.

**JONES:** Right, right. Well, I would say the big picture here on that question, because I think you're right that when people say democracy is broken, they fear that democracy is under threat. They are thinking-- Americans are thinking about different things. And I think that the the thing that, you know, a lot of my research has been around, like, what do kind of white Christian people think, right? And they're, they're thinking something quite different, I think, when they're thinking democracy is under threat and all that. And I think that the work we've done, you know, with you and Bill on white Christian nationalism, I think is a clue here. And that's a kind of newer term, but it's a very old question, right? And the question for us really that I think we're still trying to answer as a country is essentially this one: Are we a pluralistic democracy where everybody stands on equal footing before the law, or are we a kind of divinely ordained promised land for European Christians? Like, is that who we are, right? And those are fundamentally different visions of the country. I think it's a part of what we're-- so you think about replacement, right? Russel, you talked about that. Like, well, what's the placement part of that, right? If you think about the placement part of that, right, it is, you know, your indigenous friends, it is European Christians coming in with a divine mandate this to displace the original inhabitants, to displace Africans and sort of harness their labor for free in this country. Like, that's a big part of what's going on.

And then I think the other difficult thing, and I think why, Joy, you mentioned, like, "American going mad", and I think you're right that COVID, and just kind of how that really scrambled everything, was part of it in the midst of Obama to Trump to COVID. I think you're absolutely right that that cocktail has just been disastrous for the country. And all that occurred while the country was moving from being a majority white Christian country to one that was no longer a majority white Christian country. All of that happened at the same time, right? So demographic shift passed this milestone. So I think in some ways it's no wonder that we've got this kind of volatile cocktail, and I think we're at this dangerous inflection point in our history. We're being test tested, right, in many ways to see which of those two questions, which of those two visions of the country are the ones that we're going to ultimately embrace and move forward into. And there's a real fight about that.

**REID:** Can I just add to that? I think I would throw one more thing in there. You know, I think people-- if the timelines getting mushed because it's like every day is Wednesday and like it's always, you know, late August, I don't know. It feels like time has kind of stopped. But in the midst of of the pandemic, that's also the jolt when George Floyd happened. So you have people sitting home watching, you know, with their adult children back in the house, and especially for white Americans watching their kids become 'woke.' And so this panic over not just demographic change, but also ideological change among their own kids. I think part of the panic among-- you know, I'm going through some of these numbers, the people who are the most concerned about democracy being broken are not even Gen Z, right? It's, it's slightly higher among millennials who are also incredibly economically, you know, shaky, partly because of the pandemic. You know, a lot of the opportunities for Gen Z and millennials evaporated during the pandemic.

So you have like a lot of economically anxious young people who actually, you know, per this-- these numbers report more concern over the economy, over being able to afford a place to live, over being able to afford rent. So they're the ones who are economically anxious. Not MAGA voters, older voters, Trump voters, they're more economically secure. So their only concern is the ideological change of their own kids on everything from race to LGBTQ issues. And so that, to me, underscores the panic about, about what's being taught in school because, like, "How did my kids become like this?" You know what I mean? "I'm not woke. How are my kids so woke? Why are they so concerned about trans kids? Why are they so concerned about George Floyd? Why are my white kids in the streets doing a Black Lives Matter march?" That's panicky, right? And so you have a lot more similarity.

You know, one of the striking things that's not in this survey, but is in actually the exit polls from 2022, for the first time, white Americans under 30 voted majority Democratic. I mean, people forget, even with Obama, the majority of white Americans, regardless of age, vote-- are Republicans. It's just-- you throw a rock at ten white Americans, six of them are Republicans, no matter who the candidate is. But that has now started to change by age. So now, under 30, particularly college-educated white people under 30, have gone the other way. They would have like 55% for the Democrats. And that's the first time that's happened. That's in 2022. So the panic over Biden among conservatives is also, I think, about their own kids and about the generations that they no longer can control their ideology. They're becoming less religious, they're less likely to report as Christian, they're less likely to be any religion at all. They're much more ecumenical when it comes to that, and they're much more ecumenical when it comes to race, although you know they're raising young people, too. But basically, you know, the majorities are shifting the other way.

**DIONNE:** Thank you. I want the whole panel to respond to this kind of, "How we are different countries?" But let me also throw another question in the mix, which is there were some really disconcerting

numbers here for President Biden. And one, one thing struck me, which is on the one hand, the survey says that Democrats are more likely than Republicans to vote on the economy as opposed to cultural issues. And yet the one issue that crosses party lines is concern about prices, about high prices. This strikes me as a real challenge to Biden and the Democrats. Lilliana, do you want to start with that? And I'd like Robby to grapple with that and maybe some of the other indicators in this survey.

**MASON:** So, I mean, saying the economy is your biggest concern is the safest and easiest answer to give to a pollster. In the 2022 election, everybody said it was the economy, and it turned out it was abortion. But they didn't want to say that to the person asking them questions. That's a very personal thing. So to some extent, I question once somebody is in the privacy of the voting booth, how much is that actually driving their vote? But, but it's also this-- it's like the last thing that you can say that's bipartisan, right? Like the economy is-- I'm worried about, I'm worried about my pocketbook, I'm worried about my family, I'm worried about my kids. But also, you know, that-- a lot of that 'worried about my family and my kids' has actually bled much more into cultural questions about what my kids are learning in school. I'm worried about who my family is surrounded by in our neighborhood. I'm worried about what kinds of things I'm going to have to confront, ideas I'm going to have to confront in my life. And so, from a from a political psychology angle, the the economic argument is always there. It makes sense. We all worry about money all the time. But it's not a deep driver. It's not one of those sorts of primal, primal things that drive all of us from, you know, the beginning of time. Because what drives us from the beginning of time is worry about our status and our identity and our group. And so to the extent that the economy matters to everybody, yes. But how much, how deeply is it motivating people's vote, is the question.

**DIONNE:** Just to follow up, I think that's a really good point. And economic issues can be racialized or culturalized. There's a lot you can do with economics. I agree with that. But, you know, Biden is kind of proud of being a lunch bucket labor Democrat. He has run, you know, an effort over the last six months to lift up Bidenomics quite explicitly. You know, people read my column, though I'm quite personally, quite sympathetic to that. And yet this is really a challenge. I'd just throw the question, again, is, is this not a challenge to him, what we're seeing here?

**REID:** Yeah, I think it is.

**CONTRERAS:** I think it is because I'm in New Mexico, and what I found when I go to northern New Mexico, which has been a historic, strong Democratic area, I'm starting to see holes. And when I spoke with Hispanic ranchers, the, the space where the Chicano movement began, where ranchers actually took over a courthouse in the 1960s, who've used violence, when I speak to them now, they're sort of leaning to Republicans. Not because they're embracing the national Republican model, it's because they have really

deep disagreements with Democrats over endangered species. They're ranchers. They wanna graze. They're fighting over water rights. They're fighting over access to lands that they signed an agreement, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in the 1800s. And they see Democrats, especially from the East Coast, not understanding the issues out West. That allowing a cow to graze has been something that's gone on for years. And if you pull back and say, "No, we have to protect this frog or something," they get very angry. And then they try to petition the Department of Interior to say, "Hey, you're violating agreements that we've had in place for years. And the response they get is like, "No, this is an environmental concern. To hell with your economy, you need to change." So now there's this reaction, this visceral reaction to what they perceive as Democratic policies that's not being discussed in mainstream media.

And then as you try to go after this growing Hispanic vote, you get them and engage with them, but then you don't like what they have to say so you try to impose your beliefs. And a lot of races that you'll see, and you'll see this in the upcoming election, they'll recruit Hispanics to run for office, especially in the House, but yet they'll hire white-controlled political consultants. They get things wrong, like what kind of music that would get us excited for a candidate. I don't know how many times I've been to events in New Mexico when they're playing salsa. Mexicans don't like salsa. There's Selena, right? So you have a misunderstanding, this lack of engagement. And so I know the Biden administration, some of them are actually the Biden political consultants, are very concerned of what the direction-- where are Hispanic voters? And it's going after years of disengagement. So some of these numbers are reflective of that. Now, I'm not saying they're shifting strongly to the Republican, but they're up for grabs because they don't feel like they're engaged.

**REID:** Yeah, and I would, I would go to back to these numbers — and this is on figure 22 if you're following along at home, on page 42 — if you look at concern about the economy or a party race and generation. Hispanic voters stand out at 59% of being economically concerned about the economy. Black, AAPI voters, and white voters— white voters are actually the lowest concern, 43%. Then you go to non-college graduates, it's 51%. College graduates not as concerned, obviously a bit more affluent. Then you go generationally, it's my generation, Gen X, that stands out as the most. But then closely behind them are millennials, who again, are some of the most economically displaced due to COVID, and Generation Z who have essentially had the last several years of their lives sort of evaporated when they're in college, etc. They are high economic anxiety voters. Boomers and the silent generation are pretty good, like they're 30 per-- 39% and under.

So whereas the media did all of these stories where they would have, you know, a, you know, white non-college voter staring out of a window, thinking about-- you know, and they're like, "How can we try to understand MAGA voters?" The economically anxious voters are not them. It's Latinos, it's young black and

white Americans, it's AAPI voters. It's actually the voters who've tended to vote Democratic, and they actually do vote on the economy. That's the irony. The people who the media has stereotyped as economically anxious, which is MAGA voters, they don't vote on the economy. Their interest is cultural. The things they vote on our cultural. "I don't want the trans guy in the bathroom, that's how I'm voting. I don't want women to have abortions, that's what I'm voting. I don't like economic change, I'm demographically panicked, I need to vote for the candidate who's going to make America great again, meaning make it white and Christian again." Trump yesterday said, "We're not going to let people in who aren't for our religion." What's our religion? He's not even religious, right? He's-- I doubt he's ever been to church. He's at 2 Corinthians like, you know. So-- but he speaks for white evangelicals who are not economically anxious. They are older, his voters. They are more boomers. They are more silent generation. They have more money. It is Democratic voters who vote on the economy. And right now, they are highly economically anxious, highly doubtful about Bidenomics, highly dubious about things like more electric grid. But does that mean no more jobs in the auto industry, the traditional auto industry where a lot of them still work?

And so I think Biden has some work to do in terms of the economy, because all I hear from my kids age and their friends is, "I can't afford my rent. I can't afford my bills. I can't afford to live. And y'all are sending money to Ukraine. You have plenty of money when Ukraine wants money and no money for me. You have plenty of money when Israel and Gaza blow up into war, suddenly you've got more money, and you're going to send them money. But you can't cover my student loans, you can't forgive my student debt because we don't have any money. But you've got money for war." So the anxiety of young people, I think, the Biden administration is not paying attention to. And the anger among younger voters, and voters of color, Latino voters, is really a problem that I don't think that the Democrats have properly addressed.

**CONTRERAS:** And Latinos are really big in the oil industry and oil workers. I live in New Mexico, in the eastern part. The whole, the whole state's economy is based on oil and gas. And it's one of the best jobs you can get without a college degree. You can get 90 to 150,000 dollars working in oil fields. So when people say, "We need to get off fossil fuels," you're taking away this industry and you're not replacing it. You're doing theoretically. You want to move to clean jobs. Well, can I walk out of that oil job on Friday and walk into a clean energy job on Monday with the same price, the same salary? You can't have that. So if you talk about taking us off fossil fuels, you're talking about shifting the economy. We don't want to become a West Virginia where we don't have jobs. And then you turn around and say, "I need to get a Tesla." Well, I can't make a Tesla into a lowrider. Why do I want that car? Not only that, the owner of Tesla is a, is a tool, is a product of apartheid. So you want me to get a car that I can't make myself? And by the way, inside is terrible. I know this. As a Mexican American, I get in the car, I would totally want to fix it up with leopard

prints. I can't do that because of right to repair. So if you want to take my job and give me this car I don't want, you're going to have that anxiety.

**DIONNE:** Let me, let me flip this around because we've focused on some of the problems Biden has. I also looked at this survey and saw some real problems Trump has. Number one, and Robby you can begin with this, talk a bit more about how the sort of single issues are now flipped, particularly abortion. That's a radical change since the Dobbs decision. So that's on the one side. There are a whole bunch of issues Democrats have on their side that they didn't have before in terms of mobilizing the electorate. The other is that the, you know, the fact that people keep saying, "Well, the more Trump is indicted, the more he goes up in the poles." That's not exactly right. And I was struck by, on a whole series of questions, about a fifth of self-identified Republicans — 20%, which is a big chunk of your own party, you know — think Trump committed crimes, are worried about what this means. I mean, there's about a fifth of the Republican Party that's there. But even more strikingly, independents are there. Just nearly six in ten American-- six in ten independents see the reelection of Trump as a threat to American democracy. So Biden may have some challenges, but Trump has some really big ones too that I don't think we talk about enough. Can you talk about them a bit? Or am I, or am I wrong in the premise of my question?

**JONES:** Yeah. Well, look, I mean, neither of the candidates look great. I mean, you look at those favorability numbers I mean, in any other election, we'd be thinking like they're both screwed, right? In any other election. But we know that's not the case, right? We know that they'll have like unfavorable views and vote, you know, for them. And what's notable there is that we find when we asked Republicans like, you know, who we know voted for Trump last time, would they vote for him again? Like, there's very few defectors, right? So, they know, they believe that even among that like 20% who believe he committed crimes, about half that group is still going to vote for him, right? So I think that's worth kind of like paying attention to. It doesn't quite mean what we think it might mean, right? That you can both believe, "Yeah, okay, he probably committed those crimes." But there is that kind of psychology of, "But he's kind of our bully, kind of operational out here," right? And so there's a kind of pass given. It's acc-- it's getting accomplished toward our ends in a way here, and so I think that's that's part of the problem. But I think you're right among independents that there there is maybe some looseness here and those'll, those'll matter, right?

And the other big reminder, these are all national numbers, right? We don't have numbers from Wisconsin or Michigan or Pennsylvania, right? Or Arizona or Georgia or North Carolina, right? So those are where-- where are those independents in play? Those places is where it will really matter. So we can't really speak. I think, to that. These are just national numbers. But I mean, yeah. So I would say like, yes, I think

there is-- you know, we should not think that Trump is invulnerable or-- you know, I don't think anybody can catch him. I think, you know, clearly that's what we're showing here. There's nobody on the horizon that's going to step in and save the Republican Party from Trump. That-- we're clearly not seeing that, you know, in the election. So we're going to have the Trump-- it looks like it could be the Trump-Biden thing, and, you know, we'll see. The-- in a room, those states are really close, right? So a little bit of play in Wisconsin, right? That could be game over.

**REID:** Well, I mean, the--.

**DIONNE:** Go ahead.

**REID:** No, I was just gonna say that, you know, if you could come up with a less polarizing, more sort of Joe normal Democrat than Joe Biden, I can't tell you who that would be. Joe Biden is just... he's normal, you know. He's just a regular old politician, been around a long time. We've had Joe in our lives most of our lives. He's been a politician forever and ever and ever. And yet, the percentage of people who say that Joe Biden — Joey, Joey, is his [inaudible], God love him —86% of Republicans call him a threat to democracy. Now, the good news is it's more intense on the Democratic side. Ninety-one percent say that Donald Trump is a threat to democracy. But just them being that close in percentages of people saying, the two of them who could not be more different, and one of whom tried to overthrow the government.

But Biden-- and all he's done is, I don't know, do like empathetic Joe Biden stuff, pass like infrastructure bills, like he's done like bipartisan bills and stuff. How is he a threat to democ-- what's his voters? It's who voted for him. Because there's nothing he's done that's been — other than his policy right now that I think is really polarizing inside of his party — he hasn't really been divisive. He's been very ecumenical. He's tried to separate MAGA Republicans from regular Republicans and he's rhetorically always bipartisan. And yet Republicans view him as an absolute threat to democracy. And then you go down the list, and generationally, the numbers, to me, also should be more different. Gen Z is has the widest gap: 61% of Gen Z say that Donald Trump is a threat; 45% say Biden is a threat. Millennials, it's 55/56— it's almost tied. Gen X, 60/5— that's like a tie. And baby boomers, 57 to 52; so that actually concerns me. And I wonder what you make of the fact that you have such an intensity of people saying that Biden is a threat to democracy?

**DIONNE:** Yeah, it's a great question.

**JONES:** I'll be quick here. I want to make sure we get to the audience. But I think this is a symbol where like the-- where, where we're-- it's kind of broken, right? I mean, and we see it in some other numbers, like we have eight in ten Republicans who say the Democratic Party has been taken over by socialists, right? Eight in ten Democrats think the Republican Party's been taken over by racists, right? In this survey, right? And so I think the problem is — and we know, like in political science, like one of the biggest drivers has

been this negative partisanship — it's demonizing the other party, right? And it's been this-- and E.J., even the ads you just mentioned, right, are all about that in Virginia, right? It's, it's not about like what our candidate's gonna do for us, it's like how awful the other party and the other candidates are going to be. And I think that turn cycle, you know, that we're going to see from campaign ads from now to November, it's just gonna kind of keep this up, and it leaves a kind of cynicism, right.? And particularly for independents who are a little bit less disengaged, all they hear, right, is that demonization of both sides. And they, they do end up kind of saying, "Yeah, well, maybe they're all the same," right? They [inaudible] may like one or the other. But at the end, end of the day, I kind of throw up my hands because that's all I hear.

**DIONNE:** One interesting thing — I want you to come in, Lilliana — and then I'm going to go to the audience, and also just throw out some of these thoughts that we got from people off the survey. This survey also points out that Biden and Trump may have their challenges with the electorate, but if you ran a No Labels candidate who was a Democrat Joe Manchin, or a Republican Larry Hogan, that No Labels candidate, each of them got 10% of the vote. The sample was split test. So that option is not, it's not something people are rushing to either. But, Lilliana, go ahead.

**MASON:** Yeah, I mean, I think that it just makes it clear that it's not about Biden, right? We're not, we're not-- they're not talking about Biden. And I think that you're, you're both right that Democrats actually do care about the statistics and the facts and what's happening in the economy. And Democrats love to talk about the numbers. And like, if I just get-- if I just tell them this number, they're going to change their minds, right.? But like, what Republicans know, what Trump really knows, is that feelings don't care about your facts, right? Yeah. The-- you can tell a story that evokes a lot of emotion and fear and anger, and that will stick with people no matter how many numbers you tell them and no matter how many facts you give them. And, and so to this day, I think Democrats have not figured that out. You know, it's a noble thing to be able to want to say like, "These are the actual facts. And I believe that if I tell you these things, you will change your mind." But, but, you know, that means that they're sort of fighting with one hand behind their back.

**CONTRERAS:** Yeah, the ten-point plan never works when you try to go in communities of color. So here's the ten-point plan here, and you go into the barbershop. And the barber's like, "Man, I can't even read this, bro. I don't know what you're talking about. " You cannot have engage in that way. They want to know the narrative, not a list of facts.

**DIONNE:** So let me just read — you can or cannot take it any of these, but it's very interesting what people wrote us about. This, this —God bless this person — "How do you anticipate faith groups, especially churches, can use this information? What are your thoughts on Shannon McGregor and others who say that the focus on polarization is a distraction from the real problem of the radicalization of the right? How



important is the independent voter? Can ranked choice voting be part of the solution to this problem? Can liberal religion support liberal democracy? How much is this period similar to the Gilded Age?" And the person has a pretty good analysis there. "How can we shift the focus away from symptoms to root causes?" And a state representative wrote, apropos I guess for what's going on on Capitol Hill today: "Is it possible for moderate Dems and Republicans to work together despite the chatter of fringe elements of their party?" So, I'll just-- any of those. There are a lot of others that we got, and I want to thank everyone for them. But just keep those in the back of your mind. Sir, we have a mic. I'm going to go to the back first. Whoever's closer. That gentleman right there. Yeah, go ahead.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thank you. I appreciate the panel and the information. I grew up in Columbus, Georgia. And in 1963, I got arrested trying to go to the all-white library when many people thought that was great, making America great. But it just seems like to me, it was great for who? You, you can't say that I'm a citizen. And I was forced in civics to say, to memorize the Declaration of Independence and parts of the Constitution, "We the people." "We the people" didn't include me. My great-grandfather was an enslaved person brought from Africa. And so while some people were partying and enjoying the prosperity in Columbus, Georgia, my people couldn't even go to the library, the restaurants, the parks, and everything. And so, you know, we've got to acknowledge, you know, what existed. It was great for whom? And it was also bad for some people. Thank you.

**REID:** Well, by the way, a good friend of mine, Teresa Tomlinson, used to be the mayor of Columbus, Georgia so. And I will just say that I think that it, again, shows that the, the preferences on, particularly among Republicans and white evangelical Christians, is a nostalgia. It is, it is a desire to believe that the past was actually gauzy and wonderful, and a refusal to accept how horrible it was for people of color, for women, for indigenous people, for Latinos, for everyone but them. And I think there is a hate, a clinging to a pretense that this past, that was so awful for almost everyone else, was good for everyone because it was good for them. And I think there was a refusal to let it go. And Trump feeds into that.

**DIONNE:** Can I just say one of the surprising things — we've been asking this question for a while and everything you just said is true — but what you find is a new split among black Americans on this question. That, you know, black Protestants in the group say that America's best days are behind us now. There are a lot of different reasons they might say that. They might say Trumpists are taking over, they might have economic difficulties. But that's been a fascinating finding that we keep running into that. The answer to that particular question is not the one that might be expected, given the truth of the narrative you offered. Yeah.

**REID:** I was gonna say, can you, can you do-- can you compare how people felt about that when Obama was president? Because people might be saying that because the, the decline culturally and civically post-Obama might be a part of that. They're saying, "Oh, America's best days--."

**DIONNE:** No, [inaudible].

**MASON:** They actually are [inaudible] among undergrads, and they're nostalgic for Obama.

**REID:** It's for Obama.

**MASON:** Yeah.

**DIONNE:** I want to bring in a couple of people at the time. Let's-- we've got three hands here. Could you keep your questions short? Then I'll go to the other side and because I want to make sure I get each side of the room in. So, you go ahead. Right here, here, and the gentleman back there.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hi, I'm Allen Jeong. I'm a student at Georgetown. So, do you have any instances of American voters' attitudes toward the China issue or the North Korea issue, which are mentioned over and over again at the Republican primary debates? Thank you.

**DIONNE:** Thank you. Please, welcome. It's good to see you.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thank you very much. I'd like to kind of challenge the way the questions are sometimes written, the ones about America's best days behind. Those questions, I think, should be recast in terms of white power. And do you think that whites have lost power since the good old days in the fifties? And power then was defined in part by who could vote. And up until the fifties, it was pretty much white people. The people in the cities didn't count, the people in the rural areas, and women. So white men and white power elected all tiers. And now you're talking about violence, but not voter suppression. And there's suppression in all levels, whether it's campuses or other locales, because it's not easy to block voters anymore.

**DIONNE:** Thank you. Robby can talk about the question-wording. We have debated this very question. Sir?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thank you. I'd like somebody to perhaps explain why it is that so much of the commentary about what has happened in the United States over the last four years amounts to characterizing it as threat to democracy, when in fact, there have been many points along the process since the 2020 election that exhibit the fact that our democracy has worked pretty well. I mean, Trump lost 62 out of-- or 61 out of 62 legal challenges. There are just a lot of things that have gone well after being totally subservient to Trump for four years. Pence did his job in the Senate. And I won't go on to other things because there's-- time is of the essence, but we just don't hear enough about what has worked since 2020.

**DIONNE:** So on all of these, just Robby, specifically, we-- did we poll much in this particular survey on the questions the gentlemen--?

**JONES:** We do have-- we have a question on foreign policy on page 63, where we asked about China here. Basically, the main question we have is whether China is an ally of the U.S., friendly but not an ally, unfriendly but not an enemy, or an enemy of the U.S. We asked about Ukraine, Mexico, Hungary, China, and Russia in there. And what we found there is that it's only 16% of the country who say China is an ally or friendly but not an ally, it is 34% who say they're unfriendly but not an enemy, and it's half who see China today as an enemy of the U.S. Again, these are end of August numbers, right? So--.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** North Korea?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** We don't have North Korea, unfortunately.

**DIONNE:** The-- do you have anything on these other two questions for anyone? I mean, they are — just in defense of a survey, there have been questions more pointed than this one. We just found-- we just asked the question this way because it was an interesting sort of-- it was more a vibe question. We know what you say is true. And we have had a lot of questions about voter suppression and other things, but it was fascinating. This question proved to be quite instructive in terms of attitudes toward other things. Do you have any response to this or the successes our democracy has had in the last four years?

**CONTRERAS:** Well, if you've watched PBS NewsHour on Fridays where you'll see David Brooks will say, "No, our institutions have held up," it's a great way to go into the week, and "Oh, everything's fine here." So that's always, that's what I always think of. But one of the things I think is looming, and we've talked about the polarization, is there are divisions about how we see America. And you see that back there where white evangelicals are going one way, Hispanic Catholics and black Protestants are going another. And there's a lot of religious ignorance around the country of each other. One thing I've noticed that, and when you engage with white evangelicals and you ask them questions, it goes down to their-- in their theological view of the world, they emphasize the death and resurrection of Jesus and going to hell as a damnation, as a possibility. Hispanic Protestants-- or Hispanic Catholics and black Protestants focus on the teachings of Jesus and fighting poverty, focus in on the least of these. Yes, they theologically agree with each other, but their emphasis describes their worldview. And if you go all the way back to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King in the civil rights movement, when people asked then Billy Graham, you know, "What-- how do you believe in civil rights? What do you endorse?" And at first, he was kind of lukewarm, and then he would later say, "Civil rights will come when Jesus comes back." So in a perspective, if you're comfortable now, you have nothing to worry about, especially if you're white and privileged. "But things will get better when Jesus comes back."

So you're in poverty now? Don't worry about that, it'll come." It's a privileged position that a lot of blacks and Hispanics just can't get their head around.

**DIONNE:** Real quick on this side. That gentleman, Peggy — you always have to ask your question, Peggy — and this, this woman over here.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** The survey data is very scary. And I know that you all are here to describe and analyze the data, but I would love to hear your thoughts about particularly how we get white people to calm down. It seems like, as Joy, you mentioned in your comments, you know, and it's just true. Objectively speaking, white people have never had it better in American society. They're wealthier, they live longer, you know, they're more educated than everybody else, you know, so--.

**REID:** It's a bit of a [inaudible] caveat that white people have had it better. They used to get to own black people. And they-- and there is actually a huge disparity in life expectancy among white Americans, depending on whether you live in a red state or blue state. White people are actually dying younger than black people at this point because if you control for political affiliation, if you live in a red state and you are white, you are likely to die eight years younger than if you live in Vermont. The reality is, because of public policy, white Americans in places like Kentucky and Tennessee and South Carolina and Mississippi are actually not doing better. They're doing far worse because they are supporting policies that actually make them sicker and make them deader. But they're doing it because they're not voting on things like the economy or on health care, they're voting strictly on culture. And on this sense of loss of cultural primacy is more important to them. So when people say they're voting against their interests, I say you don't understand what they think their interests are. In their mind, their interest is to maintain what W.E.B. Du Bois called the "Wages of whiteness." It is more important to have the cultural superiority of being white than it is to have health care, to have a dentist, to have access to a doctor. It's just-- that is their cul-- that is what they're voting for. And they're actually not better off.

**DIONNE:** Well, could I also say on that, there are, depending on where you look in the country, there are white people who have suffered a lot because of the economic transformation of the country. Trump did particularly well in counties where there were high levels of foreclosures. He did particularly well in areas where old industrial jobs were particularly threatened. He didn't do better in places with high unemployment. But there is this economic going east that's been married to the cultural unease for a big chunk of Americans who don't live in wealthy suburbs and don't fall into these categories. So I think it is complicated in that understanding this is, is really central to understanding the economic future. So, thank you for your question-

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**MASON:** I'll go. I'll add quickly that the, the the most common Trump supporter is actually the richest white person in the poorest place.

**REID:** That's right.

**MASON:** So it's a person who has-- they have status, but they are in a very vulnerable and delicate situation, and they're worried about becoming one of those people.

**REID:** And being non-college doesn't mean that you're poor because I always [inaudible]. People put po-- people put everything on poor white folks. They don't vote. Poor whi-- poor people don't vote. Poor black people, poor brown people, poor Asian people, poor people don't vote. So don't put it on poor white people. It's rich white people. They voted for Trump. Not poor for white people. They don't vote.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hi, I'm Peggy Orchowksi. I'm the congressional correspondent for the Hispanic Catholic [inaudible]-- Sorry.

**DIONNE:** Give Peggy her voice.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I wish there were more nuances to your questions. I'm sure you'd find more agreement if, instead of saying-- talking about abortion as something that's either-or, that-- I think most Americans agree that there should be abortion with limits, say 12 weeks, 15 weeks. You'd probably find more people agreeing if you did that. Same with immigration. Between open borders and managed immigration, I'm sure you can find a lot of agreement among Democrats and Republicans about how it should be managed and how. But my biggest question is-- I think it was the last time I talked to you, E.J., which seemed like ten years ago when they were talking about the wonderful book, "How Democracies Die." And that book very much emphasizes liberal democracies. And that's a nuance, I think, is lacking. Are we talking about the disappearance of liberal democracy or federal democracy or state democracy or-- there's so many different kinds of democracies. I think it would really help to at least include that what would I call some of this spin by omissions.

**REID:** Can I just so quickly [inaudible] on page 49--.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** So what do you think about liberal democracy?

I just want to just correct one thing. The difference between all Americans, Republicans and Democrats, on whether abortion should be legal in most or all cases. Eighty-two percent of Democrats say it should be legal in most or all cases. Only 38% of Republicans say that. So there-- it actually, there isn't more agreement. There's actually the opposite of that. That Republicans are asked that. Now, it is true that only 17% of Republicans say that abortion should be illegal in all cases, and only-- but only 4% of Democrats say that. So there is a huge difference on whether, by parties, people think abortion should be legal.

**DIONNE:** Let's just bring in this young woman, and then we'll close everybody because I'm already overtime. Here, please. Thank you.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hi, thank you. My name's Lily. Sorry.

**DIONNE:** [Inaudible] I missed you over here. I just ran out of time.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Lily Kincannon with the Bipartisan Policy Center. And I have a question about the data that was collected on Americans' views of teaching history to children. And we-- you talked about what a positive number that is, the 94%. But I'm curious how you interacted with this idea that our perception of what is good and bad history might have swayed those results.

**DIONNE:** Thank you. Good for a representative of the Bipartisan Policy Center to end on a relatively positive note. Bless you for that. Why don't we let me go down the line and end with Robby? He can defend all its questions, say it's all nuance. But Joy, you start.

**REID:** Yeah, I will say to that point that is good news that people actually at least have the goal. And, and there is a big difference of what people think positive history is. I think that is true. But I will just very quickly close by saying, if you will recall —well, maybe you won't recall because no one was alive then — in 1856, we actua--.

**DIONNE:** I covered that election.

**REID:** As did I. We're, we're OGs. In 1856, we had the longest House speaker vote in the history of the United States. It was something like a hundred [inaudible] ballots, right, to, to get to Speaker. The issue, that issue was slavery. It is that the remnants of the Whigs were opposed by what was emerging as the radical Republicans, which, at that time, just meant they really hated slavery. And they were demanding that the party take an issue opposing the expansion of slavery in the United States. It broke the Whig Party, created the Republican Party. It's why it exists. Not long after that, we had an actual civil war. So the good news is there's always been a side and a camp in the country that demands progress, that it is on the side of progress. But the bad news is that this country has an incredibly violent history and a history of of non-democracy and non-pluralistic and being opposed to pluralistic, multiracial democracy. That's just the history. So nothing about this is new. The information in this survey is bad news. But as Rachel Maddow says, history is here to help. We've been down this road before. The 1930s was much like this era, but including the fascism, the pro-Naziism, all of that existed in the thirties, a near overthrow of the government, all of it. And we managed to cycle out of it. So the good news is that we might be at the bounce, that this might be the low point for now, and that we may bounce out of it. The bad news is we tend to bounce back. It's something about America that we just can't seem to stay up.

**DIONNE:** Russell?

**CONTRERAS:** To answer the brother's question about, "How do we get people to white people to calm down?" I used to, for years, just use humor when people called. They would call and say, "You're nothing but a Marxist." And I would say, "Richard Marxist or Groucho Marxist?" And of course, they always love Richard Marx's and the eighties music, and it would be cool. I can't do that anymore because there's just a visceral reaction when someone says, "Are you really legal?" And I'll say, "My [inaudible] name is Russell. I mean, that's my name. What do you think?" I can't do that anymore because I'm getting this terrible, visceral reaction. And it's easy to get disenchanted and say the country is real trouble.

But then I remember our ancestors. We're talking about enslavement. I had an uncle who was a [inaudible] to that. He was a Holocaust liberator. And he came in and he couldn't buy a home because he was Mexican, as did my grandfather. And I try to put myself in the position, and I know at one point in their lives they felt that maybe we do need to be separated, maybe we're not-- we're inferior, maybe we're incapable of love. But then they turned around and fought and did everything they can for someone like me and us to succeed. And I look at my daughters, they're going to be way more optimistic than we are. So I've-- you've got to put in perspective, as we see this, we've got to remember that the next generation is coming. They're going to be more optimistic. They'll look at us and say we're a bunch of fools as our generation looked at our prior generation. You know, we're a bunch of fools with Jim Crow. So something's coming around and we'll be okay. We may go through some things that are very tough. I don't think we'll see another Tulsa. But if we do, Joy and I will be here to report it. We're not going away. They may cancel our shows. We'll be back. We'll find something else, and we'll report the news to you.

**MASON:** Yeah, I'll just address the democracy questions a little bit. Which, which is to say, as a political scientist, I'm saying that the concept of democracy is very complicated and nobody knows what we're talking about when we say we're a democracy, we're a republic, is it federalist, is it liberal? Nobody knows. And so those terms are usually... they make people sound smart, but they're not right. Most Americans have no idea what they're about. I think one thing that I try to fall back on is some of the earliest theorists of democracy and political science. What they focused on was pluralism. Democracy, at its core, is a process by which we live with people who are different from us, and we work together to find the best possible outcome. To the extent that our democracy is doing that, it is healthy. But what we've seen right now is that the thing that structures our politics the most powerfully are parties and has always structured our politics. Our parties have taken two sides on that issue of pluralism. And when the, when the political debate is around one of the central tenets of democracy itself, we can no longer have faith that that democracy is going to be okay. If we can talk, we can compromise on virtually everything else.

But whether we become more pluralistic and actually, you know, live out the promises of the reconstruction amendments in the Constitution that already exist, or whether we're going to go back to a time when, you know, white Christian men were got to do whatever they wanted and everybody else had to pay, had to pay the price for breaking the rules. That's a-- there is-- it's hard to find a compromise point in between those two things. That's more like a tug of war. And so when our parties organize our politics in this way over a question about democracy itself, I think that's when we really need to pay attention and allow-- and the reason we talk about it is because we want the citizens to know this is, this is the underlying debate here. This is what we're talking about. And when you vote, try not to be distracted by all these other things, right? Think about the type of democracy you want to live in in the future. So hopefully we can say, you know, these types of data help us to push forward with that storyline.

**CONTRERAS:** Robby, are we going to get a Richard Marx's question in the next survey?

**JONES:** Thinking of that meme now that's all over, anyways. Only people who are like my son's age will know what I'm talking about... there's a Richard Marx meme going around.

**REID:** Is there a Richard Marx meme?

**JONES:** There is one. Yeah.

**REID:** Oh my God.

**JONES:** So, you know, I'll close with some big picture thing. So, Joy, you were mentioning other times, and you know, in my last book, I wrote about Emmett Till in Mississippi, and everybody knows he was - his killers were acquitted in 67 minutes by an all-white, all-male jury. The thing that I guess I should have known, but didn't know, is that there was not a single person eligible, a black person, eligible to be on that jury because there was not a single black person registered to vote in all of Tallahatchie County as late as 1955. Right now, that's not that long ago. And we kind of think about that, right? So there's ways in which we've been here before, but I think--.

**REID:** And not because they didn't want to be registered.

**JONES:** That's right. No, no, there was lynchings and terror and, you know, all of that, right? And all kinds of other legal and extralegal ways of preven-- of forcing that outcome. What I'm-- I think, struck by, though, is, what's different about our time, is that even then — well in places, that Tallahatchie County it was a little tricky because there were more black voters, possible voters than white voters — but in most of the country, in most of the country's existence, there's been this sense that there are enough white Christian voters that if we all voted, we win, right? That's no longer true. And I think that's the new thing that we're struggling with, right? That's what's changed and why this current iteration of it has this visceral thing. I'm with you, Joy. I really hope that we are at a kind of — I think it's great —but at the bounce point, right, where



we are finding our way. And it is this this question, I mean, the version of Christianity that landed on the shores of this country was the idea that these lands were intended by God to be used by us, European Christians. Like that's the version of Christianity that landed on the shore.

So to the question of like white people coming down, I think there's like really important work being done in white Christian churches along this line. Actually, I've been in about 130 churches in the last three years who want to talk about white supremacy. Like that was not happening even five years ago, right? Like, not just talk about racial justice, but when you talk about white supremacy and would even put that on the marquee outside the church, right? That's new, I think, happening. So I do think we're struggling with this moment, but I think that really is the fundamental question, right? Is, is, "Who's this country for? Who owns this country? Who are real Americans?" right? That's really what these elections are about. And what this data is really pointing us to, and we are struggling, and the fever is high, I think, right now. And I'm all in on this. I'm hopeful, right, that the fever will break soon. But that's-- we're in the midst of that struggle right now.

**JONES:** I want to bring up my friend Bill Galston to close. I just want to say, Peggy, your question reminded me of the late Jack Kemp, one of the great, upbeat, racially open Republican conservatives who always was very careful when he defended liberal democracy because he didn't want anybody to think he was a liberal. So he would always say, "Small l, small d." I think when we talk about-- then he'd write me a friendly, nasty note about how wrong I was about taxes, but in a very warm way. So, I love Jack now. But, you know, I think we're assuming a liberal democracy, meaning free speech, free press, freedom of assembly when we talk about this. I agree with the gentleman. We've made it so far. We shouldn't overlook the successes, but I think the survey shows us that people aren't crazy to be worried. I'm not saying you said that, but I think there's a real anxiety about whether these institutions can survive the degree of change that we've had. And so we can honor that. We've made it so far, but we can be very concerned about what we need to do to go forward. And Bill is going to give us marching orders, so he'll tell us why we need to go. Go ahead, Bill.

**REID:** Fix it, Bill. Fix it all.

**DIONNE:** He's a really good philosopher, Bill.

**GALSTON:** I have no idea. But I will, I will close with a brief story, take you back to the year 1965, when two fundamental pieces of legislation were enacted: The Voting Rights Act and the Hart-Celler Immigration Reform Bill. The first one hit American politics and culture like a time bomb. The second one hit like a time-release capsule, okay? And we changed our voting habits by historical standards almost overnight. But it has taken us six decades to understand that from a demographic standpoint, immigration reform created a dynamic that fundamentally changed the country. And the battle that we've been discussing

on this panel is, I think, fundamentally a battle about how as a country, as a culture, as a polity, we cope with the changes that, you know, the American government, backed by the American people authorized, but which had consequences that many of the people who supported that legislation at the time did not fully understand and anticipate. So now we have come to the realization, you know, that our forefathers 60 years ago authorized in the name of the American people, a fundamental change in America. Now, what do we do with that change? And, you know, how can we make it normal, acceptable, the basis of conversation, rather than the basis of contestation? I don't know the answer to that question, but I do have a hunch that that's the question. Thank you all for attending. For those hundreds of people online, I'm quite sure that it hasn't been boring. And thanks to Robby and our panel.