

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Upcoming election to test our desire, determination to defend democracy

One week from today, we will reach a political crossroads where the concepts of liberty, freedom, democracy, justice, and the rule of law are at stake.

If that sounds like a bit of an overreach or an outlandish exaggeration, alarmingly it is not.

November 5, it seems safe to say, is the modern equivalent to D-Day, serving as a pathway to victory for the forces of rule and reason or a potentially devastating setback for those determined to safeguard the nation – and the world – from the inherent threats posed by dictatorial regimes.

The two conflicting scenarios are spelled out in searing detail in the most recent issue of *Paradigm* magazine, which was released in digital form last week to thousands of readers in the sphere of *Primerus*.

In the story titled, “The Atrocities of Autocracies,” written by Brian Cox, he outlines how “American lawyers are uniquely qualified to defend democracy” from those who peddle manipulated, false narratives and stoke fears of violence and hostility in desperate efforts to gain – or regain – political power.

He tells of how many of the country’s leading legal minds “now see the looming emergence of authoritarianism in the

upcoming presidential election as an existential threat to American democracy and the rule of law.” Among those sounding alarm bells is former federal appeals court Judge J. Michael Luttig, one of the nation’s leading conservative voices.

“America’s democracy has been teetering on a knife’s edge since January 6, 2021,” said Luttig in a recent PBS interview. “I believe this election coming up is a test of America’s commitment to its own democracy and the rule of law.”

Luttig, as the *Paradigm* story notes, served as co-chair of the American Bar Association’s bipartisan Task Force for American Democracy, which was formed in 2023 to study the mounting strains on American democracy in recent years and to provide actionable recommendations for reform.

One of the most obvious ways to stem the tide of autocratic rule is for lawyers, judges, and bar associations to stand up and make their voices heard, according to Luttig.

“The lawyers in America are uniquely qualified and they are uniquely obligated by their professional oath to defend America’s democracy in this time of need,” Luttig declared, noting that his legal brethren have a well-earned reputation as the “guardians of freedom.”



In that role, lawyers are specially equipped to convey a message about voting smartly on November 5 in support of candidates and issues that contribute to the greater good. Which is why everyone needs to view the upcoming election in an altogether different light, especially because of the ongoing voter suppression efforts that are intensifying in states across the nation and are designed to subvert the will of the people.

Those efforts, if successful, have the potential to lead us down the inevitable road to an autocratic state, where the opportunity to vote is no longer a fundamental right to be freely exercised. It’s a fate that we can prevent by consistently showing up at the polls, thereby repudiating attempts by extremists to sow doubts about the integrity of the election process.

Perhaps just as concerning is that an unwillingness to concede defeat is now evidently part of a certain party’s political playbook, as a number of state and federal

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candidates backed by a former president have refused to say whether they will accept the results of the upcoming elections if they are on the losing end. In effect, they are expressing their contempt for the election process as a whole, placing our entire system of democratic government in peril.

Since our country's founding, the qualities of character, civility, and competence have been ingrained in the legal profession, which has served as the vanguard for the protection of individual rights and liberties. The question now is whether voters have sufficient foresight to follow the lead of the legal profession, displaying the gumption and courage to put character above self-interest.

The answer will come with the results of the November 5 election, which may well serve as referendum on the future of democracy. The stakes are high and boil down to a desire by voters to protect – or subvert (whether outright or inadvertently) – democracy, being ever mindful of the words of the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall: “This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on.”

In recent years, the U.S. has experienced a slide away from democratic norms, fed by a political polarization caused by rising social distrust. The decline has been slow and steady and can be reversed only by an engaged electorate motivated to restore our system of governance to its former glory.

The gravest threat to our democratic institutions is posed by those unwilling to accept the results of the 2020 presidential election coupled with the possibility that many of those election-deniers will be voted into state and federal office in the November 5 races. If that does indeed happen, then we have sown the seeds of democracy's collapse, a disastrous fate that we tempted once already on January 6, 2021 at the Capitol insurrection.

That upheaval, which eventually claimed the lives of five police officers and injured more than 150 other law enforcement personnel, was fueled by the country's foremost election-denier – the then-president – who took a lead role in inciting the mob that ransacked the Capitol. On that same afternoon, he further stained one of our nation's darkest days by

posting a video message on social media, telling the rioters to “go home, we love you, you're very special.”

So special that he has promised – if elected on November 5 – to pardon all those convicted of crimes committed during the Capitol riot nearly four years ago.

But that is a story for another day.

What counts now is the need to safeguard our democracy by supporting candidates who embrace bipartisan efforts to strengthen the right to vote and who believe in the importance of preserving our most precious freedoms. Otherwise, the tragedies currently unfolding at the hands of dictators around the globe may well play out on a stage much closer to home.

Best regards,

Jack Buchanan, President