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Penn Political Review



SUSTAINABILITY AND STATE IN

2024



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A Letter from the Editor

DEAR READER,

I am delighted to introduce our Spring/Summer issue of *Penn Political Review*, entitled *Sustainability and State in 2024*. This edition's pieces analyze some of today's pressing political problems and provide solutions for how to address them. The first piece in this edition, created by Penn Political Review's Executive Board member Corey He, outlines a timeline of some of the most important moments in politics from 2020 to the present. Our hope is that this piece will provide readers with a comprehensive overview of political events before the upcoming 2024 election, which, for many undergraduates across the nation, will be the first time they vote in a presidential race.

Our next piece, *Should TikTok Be Banned?* by Cyril Rikh, discusses the economic and security ramifications of a TikTok ban. It subsequently references the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as a blueprint for improving national security in the United States. Three pieces focus on implemented and proposed climate change strategies. Josephine Howard writes about the need for the United States to establish a legal precedent for climate adaptation and migration. Joey Jung and Nicholas Kuo provide insight into marine conservation in the Galapagos and propose a *Community First Grant* initiative, which seeks to involve locals in conservation initiatives. Om Gandhi documents climate change efforts in Chicago by analyzing the "cap-and-trade" strategy, where a strict cap on greenhouse gas emissions is imposed through a marketplace that allows companies to emit a fixed amount of carbon, creating an incentive for businesses to cut their pollution faster. A compelling read for local Philadelphians, Lucas Jaeger examines the effects of mural installation and removal and their correlations with gentrification in the city. Sean Bray writes about Richard Nixon and his aspirations for China amid his 1968 presidential campaign. Two pieces provide striking opinions in light of the upcoming presidential election. In an opinion piece, Marc Edayadi describes the decrease in working-class support in mid-western states for the Democratic party. Finally, Sriman Thangaraj analyzes electoral college reform, from its historical origins to the challenges that might accompany its potential reform. Our team also had the pleasure of interviewing Rear Admiral (RDML) Paul Reed, MD, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health, the Director of the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, a pediatrician, and a senior U.S. Public Health Service Officer. He describes his leadership at the intersection of policy, healthcare, and the military, leading the country through major global health crises and spearheading future initiatives like Healthy People 2030.

In a year of unprecedented political change, it is essential to have a space where you can learn about the policy issues that interest you, understand the structural frameworks surrounding those issues, and use those insights to do what you can to change your corner of the world. And I hope that *Penn Political Review* can continue to be that space for you. I want to thank our team of writers and editors for making this edition possible, and I hope you enjoy reading.

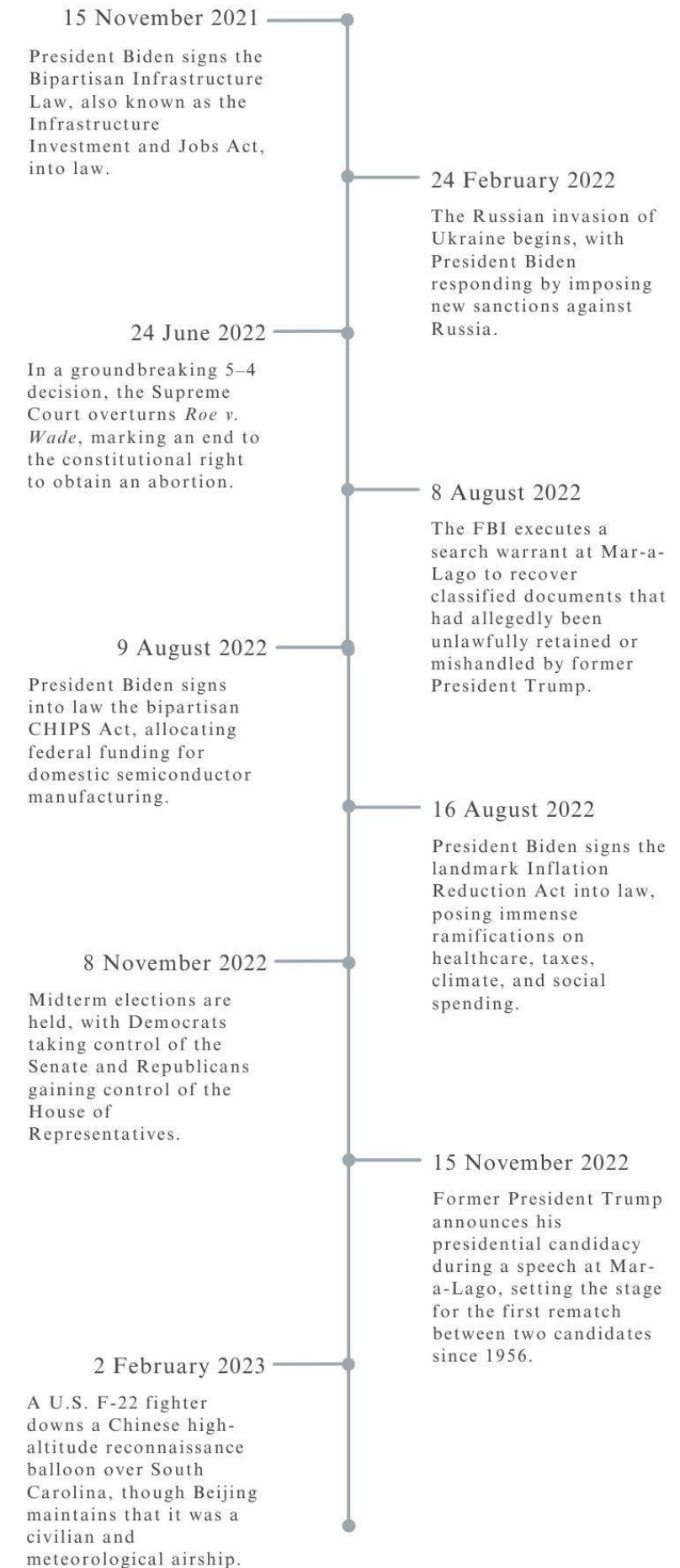
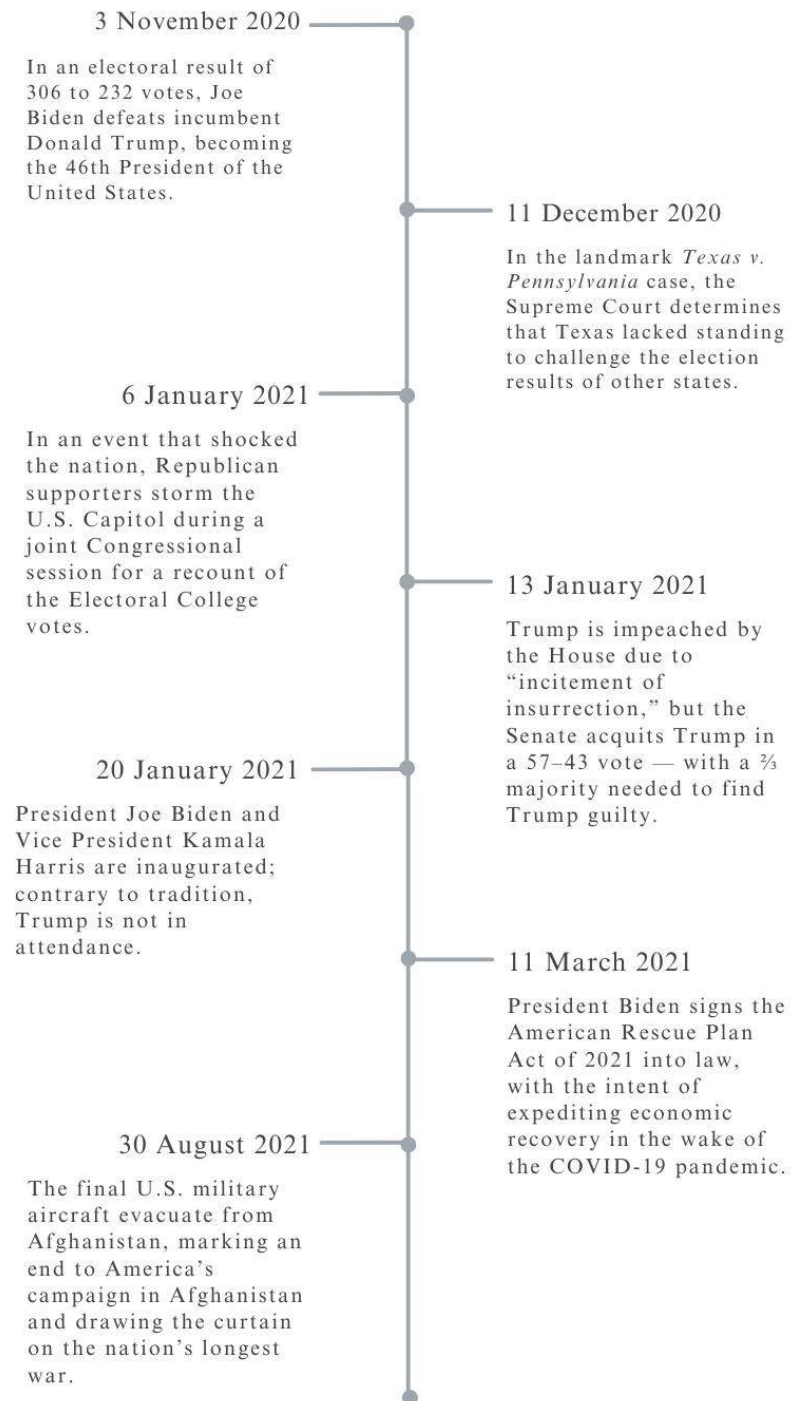
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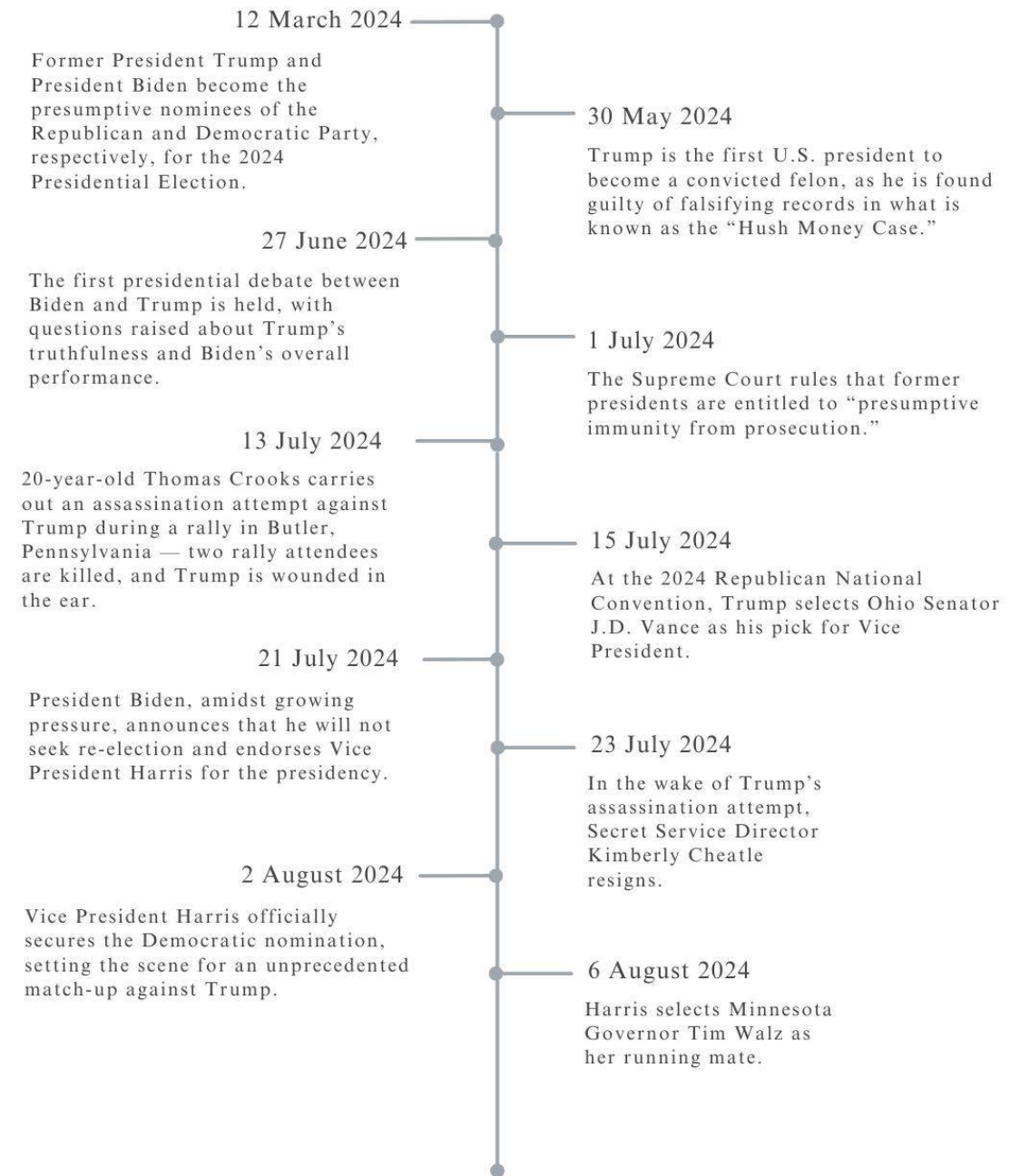
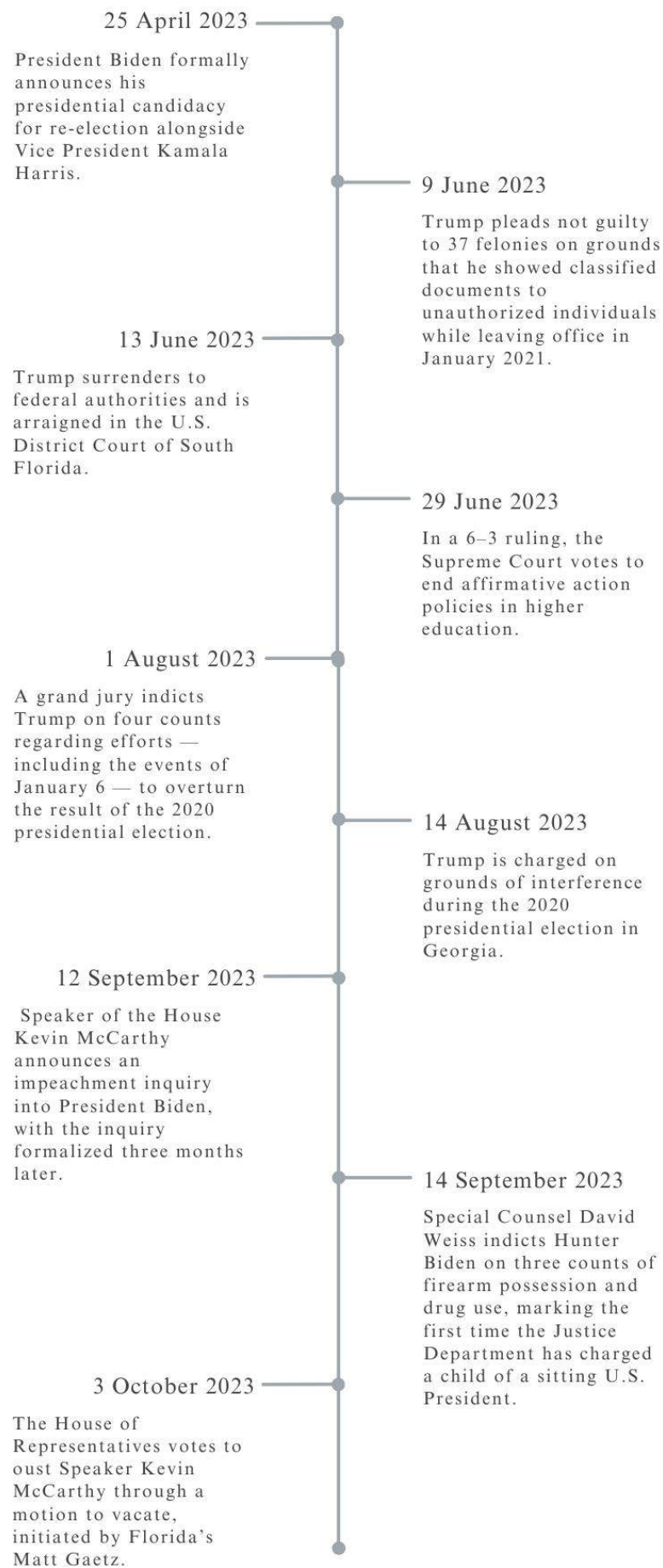


THE LEAD-UP TO A HISTORIC PRESIDENTIAL REMATCH

BY: COREY HE

A rewind on the past four years sheds light on an unprecedented period of not only domestic affairs, but global affairs as well. In a world that has drastically changed since the most recent election, we review some key political and socioeconomic events that have paved the way towards this presidential rematch.





**This edition was published in August 2024, meaning this timeline is to be continued — we will keep you all updated with new developments.*

Sources: ABC News, CNN, Fox News

And now, with just a few months to go before votes are cast, we keep our eyes glued to the headlines, waiting for the next development in what will most certainly be an unprecedented presidential race. A nation awaits.

SHOULD TIKTOK BE BANNED?

CYRIL RIKH

Photo by Jakub Porzycski/NurPhoto via Getty Images

Normally, when people think of the FBI and the Department of Justice, they think of something hardcore, like exposing foreign secret agents or preventing explosives from making it onto aircraft. But recently, these agencies have been going after a social media platform used by two-thirds of American teens: TikTok.¹

Congress and the President believe that TikTok could be a national security risk because it could allow the Chinese government to exploit Americans' personal information, just as a spy would.² As a result, the federal government has passed a law requiring ByteDance, TikTok's Chinese parent company, to sell TikTok to an American company or be banned.³

Since it is unlikely that anyone will buy TikTok, a ban is the most likely outcome of this law.⁴ The ban would involve removing TikTok from app stores and web-hosting providers.⁵ However, a ban could be economically harmful, unconstitutional, and ultimately unhelpful in addressing national security concerns.

The potential economic harms of a TikTok ban are manifold. Banning TikTok could rapidly entrench the

market dominance of competitor companies like Google (YouTube Shorts) and Meta (Instagram Reels), intensifying the government's antitrust concerns.⁶ The government is already pursuing antitrust lawsuits against Big Tech companies.⁷ A TikTok ban could make the government more determined to break up Big Tech, which could harm the United States economy overall.⁸

Additionally, the European Union might also begin targeting these companies for antitrust reasons, and fines could be as much as 10% of each's total revenue.⁹ If this were to happen, even with the revenue TikTok might add,¹⁰ Google and Meta would likely experience a net loss in earnings.

Also, while new competitors will likely appear, they probably will not be as strong as their Chinese counterparts. Four of the top ten most downloaded free apps across the iOS and Google Play stores for March 2024 were based in China.¹¹ So, setting a precedent for banning Chinese apps like TikTok could lead U.S. companies to face less pressure to innovate and compete.

Another economic harm is that other countries might react negatively to the ban. For example, the Chinese government

might reinforce its adversarial relationship with the United States by forcing companies like Apple and Tesla—which generate billions of dollars in revenue from China—to leave the country.¹²

The TikTok ban also presents constitutional concerns. Since people use TikTok primarily to share their feelings and ideas, the First Amendment may protect the platform's right to exist.¹³ Lawmakers argue that TikTok must be banned because it spreads propaganda.¹⁴ While this may be true, the First Amendment makes it very difficult for the government to ban a platform for containing content that it dislikes.¹⁵ If a ban did go through, it could weaken American citizens' trust in their First Amendment rights—as well as the strength of the First Amendment itself.¹⁶

Also, lawmakers primarily cite TikTok as a national security risk due to Chinese commercial laws that can force TikTok to share user data it has collected with the Chinese government upon request.¹⁷ But many countries, including the United States, have the same policies.¹⁸ The government has not provided substantial evidence that China's laws in particular represent a national security risk.¹⁹ They also have not shown that banning TikTok is the least restrictive solution to any existing risk—though that is what is required to overcome the strict scrutiny standards with which the First Amendment protects TikTok.²⁰ While the government has said it can overcome that barrier in court, it's unlikely that will be the case. Courts will likely want to see that the government took other, less drastic measures to prevent TikTok's risks before they started discussing banning the entire platform.²¹ But the government went directly for a platform ban.

Finally, a TikTok ban would ignore the broader problem of America's ineffective data privacy laws and might even exacerbate the privacy risks for TikTok's millions of existing American users. To keep their services free to use, many domestic companies already sell the data they collect to data brokers.²² The data these brokers have amassed is detailed

enough to identify individuals.²³ While the government is attempting to solve this problem through a bill that makes it illegal for American data brokers to sell directly to foreign adversaries, that bill is ineffective. Data brokers can still sell to intermediary data brokers that sell to foreign adversaries.²⁴ And data brokers have the incentive to do that because it makes them more money.

Furthermore, if the ban is implemented, TikTok will likely be removed from app stores. Those who have already downloaded it may be unable to receive security updates and bug fixes.²⁵ While some might uninstall the app after finding they could not access its contents, others might bypass the ban by using virtual private networks (VPNs) or other means.²⁶ So, hackers could exploit any remaining vulnerabilities in the app, posing drastic security risks to data such as users' shipping addresses, credit and debit card details, and other personal information.²⁷

Rather than banning TikTok, the federal government should focus on developing policies like the EU's GDPR to bolster American data privacy—and, in turn, the country's national security.²⁸ In the information age, data translates to power. People should not have to risk their personal information going to organizations whose missions they do not support to use services they care about.

Nixon's Big Flip Flop

Sean T. Bray

In October 1967, Richard Nixon was finally re-emerging from the political wilderness. He had yet to formally announce his candidacy, but it was an open secret that his campaign had already begun months before.¹ Years of war in Vietnam had weakened President Johnson, and Nixon knew it. The moment was finally ripe for the man who eight years prior ran as the candidate who “understands what peace demands.”² His article in *Foreign Affairs* titled “Asia After Viet Nam” offered an aspirational image of American strategy once someone finally ended Johnson’s drag-on war in Indochina.³ This article served as the start of Dick Nixon’s grand reintroduction to the American public after six years as a private citizen.

As Nixon took advantage of the way Vietnam had shaken up American politics, halfway across the world, the Cultural Revolution was shaking up Chinese politics. After two whole years of watching Mao’s China disintegrate into near total anarchy, journalist and China expert Robert S. Elegant felt it had finally reached a turning point. His article, “China’s Next Phase,” appeared alongside Nixon’s in the same issue of *Foreign Affairs*. While Nixon’s offered a vision of an Asia without war, Elegant’s offered one of a China without Mao. Together, they presented dueling narratives of how to stem the sources of Chinese conduct, and they suggest considerable evolution in Nixon’s thinking between the launch of his presidential campaign and his eventual trip to China.

Both Nixon and Elegant held rosy visions of an improved China, but they differed on how that change might come about. For Nixon, the recent history of the Soviet Union’s moderation after Stalin’s revolution-exporting excesses served as his guide for the future. That Soviet example proved containment could eventually push even a regime predicated on global revolution towards détente.

He argued that China now posed a similar existential threat to all of its neighbors that could soon push them to band together in a pro-US military pact not unlike NATO.⁵ This united front against Mao would “persuade China that it must change: that it cannot satisfy its imperial ambitions [...],” allowing for productive diplomatic relations.⁶

Meanwhile, Elegant looked to more ancient examples from China’s own history to understand its future. Mao’s PRC appeared to him to be another of China’s “radically innovating” dynasties like the Qin and Sui, both of whose brief histories proved that this current regime would not last long.⁷ He forecast that, for a time, China would regress to its earlier Warlord-era state where power is divided among regional PLA chiefs before reactionary pragmatists like Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping would seize the ‘mandate of heaven.’ In the meantime, the Cultural Revolution weakened China so much that it no longer posed any immediate threat to its neighbors.⁸ While Nixon felt China needed to be contained from the outside,⁹ Elegant saw it being contained from within.

To change something, one must first understand what it already is, yet Nixon’s article never considered Chinese domestic politics. China was communist, and that was all he needed to know. He assumed such regimes will always try to export revolution unless physically restrained. Nixon never even mentions the Cultural Revolution, while Elegant focused his entire article on it.

This neglect of Chinese domestic politics is, I believe, proof of how heavily history weighed on Nixon’s mind. His entire article relies on the premise that China is more or less a copy of the Soviet Union. Scribble out the word “Russia” in the Long Telegram and replace it with “China,” and the result will be Nixon’s understanding of China’s domestic politics. American leaders still frequently repeat this mistake today. Only now, instead of looking to the Soviets as an example of successful détente, they see it as an example of unconditional victory.

Ironically, Nixon created a world more like Elegant’s vision than his own as President. Rather than coming after Vietnam ended, engagement ended up coming before. In fact, Nixon’s Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, later wrote that the article itself was a subtle first step in signaling mutual interest in reconciliation between the U.S. and China.¹⁰ As a result of this reversal, Nixon flip-flopped on most of the other proposals in his article. Rather than pushing for Japanese rearmament, Nixon essentially traded it for acquiescence to America’s presence there.¹¹ He likewise downplayed American support for the other Asian “giant,” India, in order to placate Mao and Zhou.¹²

Zhou himself is a particularly interesting figure during this process because Nixon’s visit empowered him and other moderates. In fact, the trip seems to have indirectly ended Deng Xiaoping’s own wilderness years by stirring up new power struggles between Mao and more reform-minded pragmatists including Zhou. Ultimately, Deng, Zhou, and their revolution-weary backers would take the lead just a few years later.¹³ The system of pragmatically “crossing the river by feeling for stones” that the reformers created is strikingly similar to what Elegant prophesied.¹⁴ He could not have foreseen the exact turn of events that brought it about, but the end result proved the same; Nixon’s actions set China on the path to liberalization. China may have been lost at first, but at least for a time, Nixon seems to have inadvertently won it back.

This raises the question of whether engagement was genuinely a strategic success. In the short term, engagement did assuage Nixon’s fear of Vietnam spiraling out of control and becoming another Korean War situation — or worse, setting off a nightmare scenario where China begins exporting nuclear weaponry to communists throughout the region. But what benefit did this bring? Instead of a settlement, Nixon got an even larger war that ended in an dishonorable defeat. It also came at great cost to America’s reputation and interests outside the Pacific. To facilitate engagement, Nixon and Kissinger sat idly by as their loyal courier, President Khan of Pakistan, committed mass murder in Bangladesh while fighting with our once close ally, India. Even if we put aside the messy question of whether engagement remains beneficial for America today, it is hard to tell if the benefits really outweighed the costs, even in the short term.

Given the engagement’s mixed record, one also must wonder what motivated this evolution in Nixon’s thinking. What actually motivated this early engagement? While it is plausible that Elegant himself was partially responsible, I think this is unlikely. I attempted to verify the claim that Elegant repeatedly briefed the President and Kissinger, but

could not.¹⁵ The references to him I could find in the Nixon Administration’s records were two articles included in the President’s Daily Briefs in 1971.¹⁶ Nixon held Elegant in high regard, to be sure, but this appreciation appears to have developed after engagement already began, not before.¹⁷ Moreover, it was Elegant’s pro-war stance that prompted Nixon’s appreciation, not any particular brilliance about Chinese domestic politics. In fact, Nixon liked one of Elegant’s pro-war pieces so much that he instructed his staff that Elegant should be invited to report on the upcoming trip to Beijing.¹⁸ Ultimately, he did not.¹⁹ Still, there may have been some connection not reflected in the publicly available records from the Nixon White House. Even so, one can infer that Nixon reversed his policy out of desperation to end the war in Vietnam.

It is difficult not to see parallels between today’s tense relations with the PRC and the outlook in 1967. Xi’s dominant political position is constantly compared to Mao’s.²⁰ China’s military threat appears greater and greater as time goes on. America even appears to be trying to take a page out of Nixon’s playbook.²¹ AUKUS, ASEAN, and our bilateral security relationships with Japan, Korea, and the Philippines together very closely resemble the “Asian regionalism” Nixon advocated. But perhaps we are making Nixon’s same mistake as well. Ignore China’s domestic political complexity at your own peril. Xi may appear to be uniquely powerful, but no man truly rules alone. Sometimes, a bizarre turn of fate can flip the power dynamics in Beijing upside down as it did back in 1972 for Deng and Zhou.

DEMOCRATIC DESPAIR: DECLINING LABOR UNIONS KEY TO PARTY'S LOSSES

MARC EDAYADI

As the 2024 presidential election rapidly approaches, the country again turns its attention to the Midwest. Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, in particular, gained increased importance after being the tipping point states in both 2016 and 2020, with Donald Trump's shocking sweep in 2016 ending a Democratic streak in all three states lasting since 1992. The Democratic Party will fail to truly be a national party transcending geographical boundaries outside metropolitan areas if it continues to rely solely on increasing its margins among college-educated suburbanites unless it becomes more introspective of its struggle with white working-class voters in these midwestern states. Although they may be able to scrounge together bare House and electoral college majorities, the Senate and state legislatures will be more difficult to dominate if Democrats are not able to compete in the rural industrial heartland filled with white working-class voters. To change its image, the party needs to recognize how exactly it is failing.

In my thesis, I focus on the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) within the battleground state of Pennsylvania. Devastated by the decline of the steel industry, the Pittsburgh MSA was once a Democratic stronghold, but it has shifted to the right and is only counterbalanced in the state overall by the Philadelphia MSA. In 1988, for example, the Democratic party won 59.5% of the two-party vote share in the Pittsburgh MSA despite Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis losing the overall state vote narrowly to George H. W. Bush. By 2016, Democrats actually lost the Pittsburgh MSA, as that number had declined to 47.1% with Donald

Trump carrying the state. Even as Biden narrowly flipped the state in 2020, he won only 48.4% of the two-party presidential vote share. This extends not only to voting behavior but also to how voters identify themselves as well. In 1998, the percentage of registered voters that are Democrats was 61.55%. It has generally consistently declined to reach a low of 48.14% in 2022. Although there was a slight delay, this decline in voter identity as Democrats mirrors the decline in presidential votes more than the Senate or gubernatorial elections do.

Democrats have only now been able to achieve statewide wins despite losses in the Pittsburgh MSA by gaining among college-educated suburbanites in the Philadelphia suburbs. But in order to have a shot at large majorities in both houses of the state legislature and a more comfortable statewide majority, the party must reflect on its losses with white working-class voters. While common narratives around job loss due to industrialization may be somewhat correct, a deeper understanding of the factors at play here is necessary. The decline of labor union membership as a result of deindustrialization can add nuance to this story. Robert Putnam noted in his book *Bowling Alone* that participation in civic spaces has declined in the United States for the last few decades. These civic spaces, or "third spaces," as urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg likes to call them, are important outlets for social interaction and a sense of belonging.

Labor unions are an example of such spaces that can have a particular effect on one's political behavior. Labor unions

act as agents of collective solidarity, allowing working-class voters to unite behind their common interest of improving their work environment. They serve as forums, both through formal sessions and informal conversations, to inform members about politics. Labor union leadership themselves, especially the AFL-CIO, actively seek to promote the Democratic Party with campaign expenditures through political action committees (PACs). These factors have a significant influence on the political behavior of the union rank in file membership, especially vote choice and party identity for the Democratic Party.

Since the Pittsburgh MSA has been able to mostly stave off mass unemployment due to industrialization with more educational and medical careers, the decline of the Democratic Party in the region has more to do with the loss of labor union membership that was associated with old industrial steel jobs than with economic anxiety caused by unemployment. The statistical evidence seems to bear this out. Private manufacturing union density declined from 41.1% to 13.2% in 2022. There is a statistically significant correlation between this decline and that of the Democratic vote share. This, however, does not hold true when disaggregated to public sector manufacturing, a sector that has not seen job and membership loss to the extent of the former.

Democrats seem to recognize their declining appeal with white working-class voters. On April 18th, President Joe Biden visited United Steelworkers in Pittsburgh, vowing to triple tariffs on Chinese steel. In his State of the Union address, he also made several appeals to labor with incremental policies. However, this approach simply ignores the fact that as union membership has declined, the electorate will no longer feel the effects of an increased sense of worker solidarity and a more politically informed voter, and these appeals are not going to be as effective. To truly build a working-class voting coalition in rural and former industrial heartlands, the Democratic Party needs to commit to economic policies that lead to more widespread systemic change, as well as play a part in helping rebuild labor by protecting the recent surge in union organizing.

A good start would be to push harder for the PRO Act, a bill that would strengthen labor law with provisions banning "right to work" laws and captive audience meaning and provisions strengthening the enforcement capability of the National Labor Relations Board against employer

interference. The party has a tarnished image with the working class because of its association with the "Coastal Elite": The "Ivory Tower" and activists on the left. By laser-focusing more on the labor movement and the economic pain of the working class, the Democratic Party can distance itself from that image and create a more robust winning coalition both in the Midwest and nationwide.



CAP-AND-TRADE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN CHICAGO

BY OM GANDHI

Introduction: Recent Legislation

Recent trailblazing legislation passed by Congress in the form of the “Inflation Reduction Act” (IRA) and the “The CHIPS and Science Act” deliver historic firsts: the largest climate and clean energy investment in American history; a strong focus on domestic job creation; ten years of clean energy financial support to manufacturers and investors; thousands of dollars in savings to American families via home, transportation, and energy cost reductions; and more. Perhaps most importantly, these acts are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to around 40% below 2005 levels by 2030 (“IRA Drives Significant Emissions Reductions”).

The IRA will allow the government to spend \$374 billion over the next decade on clean energy and climate resilience (Clark). Additionally, the CHIPS Act will allocate around \$67 billion toward expediting the development of zero-carbon sectors and carrying out climate-relevant research over the next five years (Meyer). Per Anna Siefken, a senior advisor at the Department of Energy (DOE), the IRA provides the DOE \$35 billion to invest in clean energy, \$14 billion for loans, \$9 billion for buildings in the form of High-Efficiency Electric Home Rebates and energy code adoptions, \$6 billion for manufacturing, \$3 billion for the electric grid, \$2 billion for national lab infrastructure, and over \$1 billion for other initiatives.

This surge in funding for climate-related initiatives represents an opportunity for cities to significantly mobilize funds and shift their energy policy paradigm. Chicago is uniquely positioned to take advantage of this funding opportunity.

Background: Chicago

Chicago has made significant progress in addressing climate change. Although greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions totaled thirty-one million metric tons of carbon dioxide, in 2017, the city released the “Chicago Climate Charter,” which committed the city to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement. The city has set a goal of achieving 100% renewable energy by 2040 and has implemented numerous policies to support this goal, such as increasing energy efficiency standards for buildings, investing in renewable energy projects, and implementing programs to reduce waste and promote sustainable transportation, such as bike sharing and electric vehicle charging infrastructure (“2022 Chicago Climate Action Plan”).

However, although Chicago has been a leader in climate policy for many years, the city still has yet to implement a comprehensive “cap-and-trade” system, one that differs from the previously failed Chicago Climate Exchange, a voluntary, legally binding system for trading greenhouse gas emissions and offset projects in North America and Brazil (Gronewold). A comprehensive cap-and-trade system would ensure that the impact of carbon emissions o

originating from within the city is mitigated by rewarding efficiency and punishing negligence by companies that emit carbon through the creation of a marketplace in which carbon permits may be bought and sold, and companies that overuse carbon may be financially punished.

Policy Proposal: Cap-and-Trade

Cap-and-trade refers to a family of schemes in which businesses are issued permits that allow them to emit a fixed amount of carbon or carbon equivalents. If a business does not emit all the carbon it is allowed to, it can sell the right to emit the excess carbon to a different company (Wagner). For example, if Business A has a permit to emit ten tons of carbon but only emits eight tons, it can sell the extra two tons it has to Business B, which might have a permit for ten tons but then can emit twelve tons. Thus, businesses are “capped” in emissions but can “trade” their allotments to other businesses. The overall cap is decreased over time, and companies that over-emit are penalized financially, while companies that under-emit are reimbursed.

Cap-and-trade schemes are a relative novelty, but they have been proven to reduce carbon emissions in the European Union over the past fifteen years. Cap-and-trade schemes require drops in the number of permits issued to be effective. They also require consistency in terms of the number of permits dropped year-to-year (Wagner).

There is precedent in the United States for this. California has already implemented such a scheme for car manufacturers. From the beginning of the program to 2017, emissions were reduced in the sector by 5% (Morgenstern and Adler). The Californian cap-and-trade pushed manufacturers to develop and innovate new technologies that significantly reduce carbon emissions to get themselves under the cap. Cap-and-trade already has significant public support: Approximately 50% of the public would be willing to support a cap-and-trade scheme despite having minimal knowledge of its specifics (“Cap & Trade: Half Support the Idea”).

While a federal carbon cap-and-trade scheme does not yet exist, the United States has successfully implemented a SO₂ and a NO_x cap-and-trade scheme, proving that such a policy has precedent in the United States (Sweeney et al.). Efforts in the past to create a nationwide cap-and-trade system in the United States were cut short when the Waxman-Markey bill died in the Senate in 2009 (“Waxman-Markey Short Summary”). Nonetheless, the precedent of cap-and-trade at the city and state levels is promising for implementing such a plan in Chicago.

Policy Implementation Plan

This policy implementation plan is based on Washington’s “Cap and Invest” system. The Chicago Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) shall issue permits that allow Chicago companies to emit one metric ton of carbon per year. This includes any company with operations in Chicago that files a tax return with the Internal Revenue Service, both entirely American companies and subsidiaries of foreign businesses that pay city taxes in Chicago.

In the first year of the implementation of this bill, the CSO shall issue 31 million permits. The permits shall be auctioned to private companies by Representatives of the Chicago Government, to be nominated by the CSO. The CSO shall operate a city-wide marketplace for the exchange of permits. Any company that buys permits at auction may sell such permits on the exchange at any price it sees fit, and they may buy any amount of permits on the exchange at any price it sees fit.

At the end of every fiscal year, every company shall report the number of credits it holds (bought at auction or at the marketplace) and the number of metric tons of carbon it emitted. This information shall be reported on the tax documents of each private company on a new form to be implemented by the Internal Revenue Service. Any permits that remain on the marketplace (posted by a seller and not purchased by a buyer) shall be taken out of circulation by the CSO.

If the number of permits taken out of circulation after a fiscal year does not exceed 1% of total permits issued, the CSO shall remove additional permits to ensure that at least 1% of total permits issued are taken out of circulation. The CSO shall then confiscate all remaining permits from all private companies and reissue them via auction at the beginning of the next fiscal year (“Washington’s Cap-and-Invest Program”).

Monetary Considerations

The Chicago Office of the CSO shall be allocated a sum of up to \$100 million for several purposes. This includes identifying and training necessary personnel to hold auctions of carbon permits, producing a platform upon which carbon permits may be traded easily and in real-time, ensuring that the platform upon which carbon permits are traded is secure from hacking and other damaging thefts of confidential information, and educating companies within the bounds of Chicago of the new requirements relating to

carbon permits. Any funds gained from the auction of carbon permits shall be reallocated to the completion of the aforementioned tasks.

If the funds gained from auction are insufficient, then the Office of the CSO may draw up to \$100 million for the purpose of completing the above tasks. Any revenue gained from the auction of carbon permits that is not used for the completion of the above tasks shall be allocated towards the Argonne National Laboratory administered in part by the University of Chicago for the purpose of continuing research into nuclear power (“Washington’s Cap-and-Invest Program”).

Regulatory Considerations

Any private company that is found at the end of the fiscal year to have emitted a greater amount of carbon than allowed by the permits it has purchased, at auction or on the marketplace, shall be fined \$125 per metric ton of carbon overemitted. This fine will change every year in accordance with the rate of inflation. Any private company that is found at the end of the fiscal year to have emitted a lesser amount of carbon than allowed by the permits it has purchased, at auction or on the marketplace, is to be granted a subsidy equivalent to one-half of the market value of the carbon it has not used. Any private company that is found at any time to be concealing, misrepresenting, or otherwise lying about its carbon emissions, shall be fined \$250 per metric ton for every metric ton of carbon misrepresented and shall pay a further fine of 1% of its year-to-date revenue earned within the United States. The fine of \$250 per metric ton will change every year in accordance with the rate of inflation. Any funds gained from fines shall be allocated towards the Argonne National Laboratory for the purpose of continuing research into nuclear power (“Washington’s Cap-and-Invest Program”).

Conclusion

Chicago has proven in the past that it wants to be a vanguard climate city. The increase in federal funding by virtue of recent legislation can be leveraged by Chicago to implement a cap-and-trade system, a tested, market-based solution to the problem of private carbon emissions by providing businesses with an incentive to adjust their behavior. Ultimately, this is a solution that can unite both sides of the political aisle — the “free market” principles of the Right and the environmental protection ideology of the Left — while simultaneously increasing cash flow for the government to reinvest in projects like nuclear power.

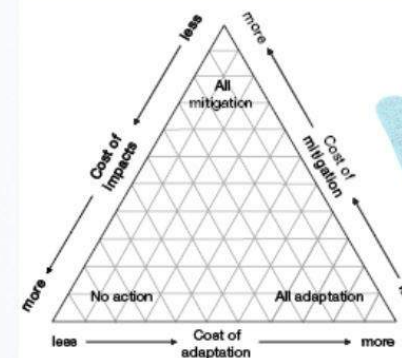
Climate Change Adaptation: Too Little, Too Late?

By Jo Howard

The current migration system in the United States is not equipped to effectively handle the influx of people who are vulnerable to climate change disasters. As climate change accelerates and displaces more people, it is critical for the US to establish a clear legal framework for climate migration to best accommodate all those who seek refuge, and to set a precedent for the international community.

Mitigation versus adaptation

Climate change has increasingly become a key international issue as worsening conditions indicate that the threat posed by it may be existential. Most responses to climate change have prioritized the mitigation of its effects, hoping to prevent an impending disaster. Of course, prevention is the most desirable outcome—but it is doubtful whether or not it is possible at this point.



Global efforts at mitigation have been lackluster at best, be it the U.S. pulling out of the Paris Accords, or extremely long timelines for countries to go carbon neutral.¹ As a result, it is not enough to solely invest in mitigation efforts at our current standard of commitment. If we keep going as we are, we will not prevent climate change from posing an existential threat—at least, not for all people (one must note that developing countries are

poised to bear the brunt of the consequences of climate change).² It is irresponsible to consider solely mitigation without adaptation to climate change.

While the world has begun to consider *physical* adaptation—though not at the level necessary to prevent massive loss of life and environmental destruction—it has not yet begun to properly consider *legal* or *political* adaptations.³ We can’t afford to keep ignoring the issue any longer. If we don’t start preparing for emergencies to come now, we will not be ready when they happen—and there is a large legal storm brewing on the horizon.

Climate migration

While the statistics on the amount of people who will be displaced by climate change vary, some reports project that up to 200 million people could be displaced by 2050.⁴ By 2100, this number could be up to 2 billion considering the worst case scenario in which climate change is not mitigated or prevented at all.⁵ For context, World War II presented the worst refugee crisis to date with around 60 million people displaced according to the UNHCR.⁶

However, the UNHCR does not even recognize the term ‘climate refugee’, nor does any state due to current legal discrepancies surrounding the use of the term ‘refugee’.⁷ As a result, people displaced by climate change are not eligible for asylum even if the nature of climate disasters renders them unable to return home. They will have to apply for permanent status elsewhere via other pathways—but those other pathways do not account for the scale of the crisis we are about to face.

The U.S. offers Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to citizens of nations experiencing natural disasters or other events that cause displacement, though this designation is temporary and subject to periodic review. Worse, it is currently required that governments desiring TPS designation for environmental reasons make a formal request, making it far less likely that people displaced by

climate change will be eligible for protection under TPS.⁸ The lack of a pathway to permanent residence compounded with the requirement that eligible beneficiaries be present in the U.S. by the date of TPS designation makes the only existing program primed to respond to climate migration wholly insufficient.

American responsibility to accept migrants

The U.S. must designate a new category for climate refugees not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it has a duty to the rest of the world. It is responsible for around 20% of historical global emissions, and its current per capita emissions make it one of the worst contributors in the world.⁹ It is largely the U.S.' fault that climate change has progressed to the point that it has, all in the name of economic progress and global hegemony. As a result, the U.S. must utilize the economic resources and political influence it has gained to address the problem head on, because we are the ones who can and must do it.

While there is little *coordinated* discussion taking place on policy proposals, some solutions have been offered. A White House exploratory report on the topic in 2021 offered some general recommendations, largely for future research.¹⁰ These recommendations include exploring TPS reforms to allow a pathway for permanent status and remove the requirement for governments to formally request TPS designation; expand the use of ad hoc parole under the Immigration and Nationality Act to grant climate migrants entrance; and develop a private refugee sponsorship program which will count against the President's annual refugee targets.

These recommendations, while being largely exploratory and therefore lacking specificity, are not sufficient to deal with the scope of the crisis at hand. Attempting to reform TPS to include climate migration begins to stretch the program beyond its means—by virtue of adding a permanent residency option, it is no longer a temporary program, a characteristic inherent to it. Furthermore, the program's existing complications concerning requests for TPS designation and dates for eligibility make it very difficult to adapt to the crisis at hand.

The White House's other recommendation to broadly use parole as described in the Immigration and Nationality Act is insufficient to meet the needs of the moment on its own, though it could be a useful tool in conjunction with well-developed long-term migration structures. Parole by nature is too fragile; it, like TPS, is temporary. If a parolee leaves the U.S., their parole ends, which is extremely limiting for

many people. Worse, it can be rescinded since parole is granted ad hoc. Knowing that immigration is a partisan issue likely to be affected by turnovers in the presidential administration, it is unsustainable to leave all climate migrants at the whims of the Secretary of Homeland Security.

The White House's third proposal to rely upon private sponsorship programs for refugees which counts against annual refugee targets is entirely insufficient to deal with the matter at hand. While private sponsorship programs would have more freedom in the definition of refugees and could therefore designate climate migrants as asylum-seekers, their counting against annual refugee targets does not guarantee that an adequate amount of people will be helped. Annual refugee targets are at the discretion of the President, and as such there is no guarantee that the President will account for climate refugees in that count. This may result in few climate refugees gaining asylum—or, concerningly, it could result in climate refugees taking a disproportionate amount of limited slots, thereby precluding other types of refugees from gaining asylum.

As such, the White House proposals are undesirable. However, a new bill proposed by Senator Edward Markey provides a much more secure framework for the acceptance of climate refugees.¹¹ The bill would establish a new category for climate refugees and accept a minimum of 100,000 per year. It would also begin to lay the groundwork for other countries to emulate the United States' model, ensuring that migrants around the world will have somewhere to go without overwhelming any one country.

The designation of climate displaced persons as refugees would not only grant those people a pathway to permanent residence, resettlement benefits, and the extension of refugee status to their families; it would also make the U.S. the first state to recognize their existence. This would go a long way in influencing other states and, perhaps, multilateral institutions to follow suit.

Granting people displaced by climate change asylum is the most empathetic and pragmatic approach towards legal climate adaptation, in acknowledging that even if individuals may want to return to their home country they cannot—and that unfortunate truth is in no small part our doing. It is then our duty to adapt and make the best of this terrible situation we have created, the kindest way we know how.

It's time for Philadelphia to start protecting its murals

By Lucas Jaeger

As part of a class my junior year, I took a Mural Walk with Jane Golden, the director of Mural Arts Philadelphia. We had been walking for a little while when we turned a corner and Golden gasped. The mural that she had been taking us to was gone, painted over without warning. We could still see a faded shadow of the mural beneath the blue paint in some places, but the piece was beyond reconstruction. Class was immediately dismissed, and Jane Golden went off to make several phone calls to attempt to determine what had occurred.

The City of Philadelphia has championed itself as the City of Murals for several decades at this point. Since its founding in 1984 as the Anti-Graffiti Network (the name was changed soon after), Mural Arts Philadelphia has been a part of Philadelphia history. Around four thousand of the organization's murals grace the walls of the City of Brotherly Love, and the work that Mural Arts Philadelphia puts into community building initiatives is immeasurable. A number of studies have shown the impact that these murals can have on communities. Notable research includes that done by Lori Flores in the Mission District of San Francisco and Tebes and Matlin in Philadelphia. However, murals can still be torn down or covered up without legal repercussions, making stories like the one above far too common. It's time for the City of Philadelphia to step in and prevent this by assigning city murals a special historical status, preventing homeowners or developers from destroying these pieces of art without notice.

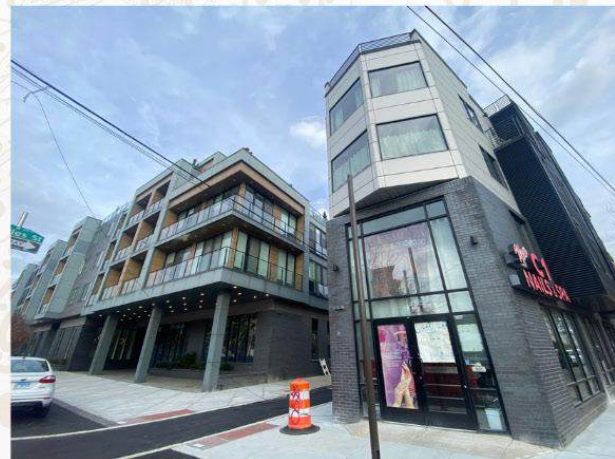
Why is the protection of these murals so important? Mural Arts began as the Philadelphia

Anti-Graffiti Network in 1984, and many have criticized their work over the past decades as glorified graffiti. However, these murals can have hugely positive impacts on the surrounding communities. Besides just making the city more beautiful, Mural Arts runs a number of programs for Philadelphians to build community and work towards an equitable city. Their Art Education program creates safe spaces for children to learn and make art. Their Porch Light program is a collaboration with the City's Department of Behavioral Health and uses art to achieve communal wellness. These programs are two of many, with others ranging from Restorative Justice and Civic Engagement to an Institute for other cities to follow the Mural Arts blueprint. These programs create hundreds of works of art every year, and participants are left better off afterwards, according to a 2015 report by the Yale School of Medicine. My thesis research in UPenn's Urban Studies program found a correlation between the removal of murals and the onset of gentrification within neighborhoods. This work claims that by preventing the destruction of murals, a neighborhood can protect itself against the displacement of current habitants by wealthier ones. These reports, as well as studies by Balliger and by Pietrantonio, Llamas, and McIntosh, emphasize the importance of murals in community-building and further advocate for assigning murals a historical status. Robin Balliger's 2021 research discussed the impact of murals in West Oakland and how the removal of several murals coincided with the gentrification of the region. Research by Pietrantonio, Llamas, and McIntosh discussed the negative impacts of mural removals on the Hispanic community in the Mission District of San Francisco. One especially poignant example discussed was the whitewashing of a mural reading "Our culture is not for sale" that was decorated with Day of the Dead symbols. New owners felt that the mural had negative themes and

replaced it with a more “inviting” piece. This new painting exemplified the recent trends of gentrification in the region and angered residents.

So how can a neighborhood prevent mural destruction? Obviously, sometimes murals will need to be removed to make way for new developments that are helpful to a community, and some murals will be removed as buildings are destroyed. I propose that a system is put into place where once a mural, or any piece of public art, is installed, its artist (or organization, such as Mural Arts) can apply on a city site for “Artistic Preservation Status”. After an art piece received this status, a hearing and application would be needed before the piece could be covered or removed. Under this system, if a developer wishes to build in front of a mural, they would need to host a public hearing to ensure that the community wants the new development. After this hearing, they would need to submit an application to the city, which must be approved before the mural could be removed.

Some may criticize this process as being anti-development. It certainly would make it trickier for developers to build over murals, or for homeowners to paint over these works of art. However, I argue that these pieces should be difficult to cover up. They are impressive and important works of art that artists and community members spent months, if not years working on. Experiences like mine, where a mural is found covered up or destroyed without any community input should not happen. Philadelphia cannot continue to market itself as the “City of Murals” without taking any steps to protect them, especially when these works can mean so much to certain communities. There are ways to protect these important pieces of art, and Philadelphia needs to start this process now.



ELECTORAL REFORM IN THE UNITED STATES

By Sriman Thangaraj

Introduction

Elections in the United States are unique, occurring at local, state, and federal levels throughout the year, but electing the President involves the indirect Electoral College system. Voters choose electors pledged to presidential candidates, who then vote based on their state's popular vote, though faithless electors occasionally deviate. The Electoral College's purpose is debated; it aims to balance influence between states of varying populations but can skew representation, often favoring Republican candidates due to geographic and partisan divides.

Given the polarized nature of current elections, reforming the Electoral College to a proportional system and enhancing the transparency of the electoral count process are critical to ensuring the principle of "one person, one vote" and restoring confidence in the electoral system.

Historical Context

The United States uses the Electoral College to ensure that the minority's voice is not overwhelmed by the majority, a principle rooted in the Founding Fathers' intent to protect slaveholding states (ProCon.org, 2023). James Madison noted the need to balance influence between Northern states with more diffused suffrage and Southern states with large, enslaved populations (Codrington III, 2020). The Electoral College was designed to maintain power among white, wealthy landowners, leveraging the Three-Fifths Compromise to diminish the impact of slave votes.

This system, deeply embedded with racial biases, continues to suppress votes from states with higher populations and more people of color, favoring homogeneously white states (ProCon.org). Reforming the Electoral College is crucial for ensuring equitable representation and reflecting the democratic values of equal voice and fairness for all citizens.

While the Electoral College can sometimes be more detrimental than beneficial, it serves several unique and vital purposes. It ensures that the vote is represented in heavily populated rural and suburban regions. A resolution from South Dakota's legislature states, "The current Electoral College system creates a needed balance between rural and urban interests and ensures that the winning candidate has support from multiple regions of the country" (Selsky, 2020). Since urban areas have the highest population density and can skew the popular vote, the Electoral College ensures that "all parts of the country are involved in selecting the President of the United States" (ProCon.org).

Policy Recommendations

One recommendation is to institute a more proportional method of choosing electors. Instead of the current winner-take-all system, electors could be split based on the percentage of votes each candidate receives. For example, if Candidate X gets 60% of the votes and Candidate Y 40% in a state with 20 electors, Candidate X would get 12 electors, and Candidate Y would get 8. While less drastic than abolishing the Electoral College, this approach is more feasible and could pass Congress. Studies have shown that proportional representation can improve minority representation and voter understanding

(Donovan and Smith, 1994). Adopting this system would enhance the majority's will and ensure fairer representation, countering the historical exclusion of smaller parties and minorities from U.S. elections.

Another recommendation for Electoral College reform is to improve the efficiency and transparency of the electoral count process. The Electoral Count Reform and Presidential Transition Improvement Act of 2022 addresses this by revising the process of casting and counting electoral votes and clarifying that state laws bind electors. It also allows for expedited judicial review if any candidate disputes the certification of results and specifies the Vice President's role in the certification process. This bipartisan bill, currently under consideration in Congress, has identical support in the Senate (S.4573) and the House (H.R.8824). Enhancing the post-election process is crucial to ensuring the integrity and transparency of election outcomes.

This bill is for the House and Senate Rules and Administration Committees, which oversee federal elections and internal government procedures. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) chairs the committee, with Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE) as the ranking member. Reforming the Electoral College is primarily bipartisan, making building support among hesitant senators and representatives easier. Advocates argue that the Electoral College prevents recount chaos, as seen in the 2000 Bush-Gore election, and ensures that presidents represent a broad coalition of states.

Critics, however, highlight that it can result in presidents who lose the popular vote but win the Electoral College. Notably, only five elections in U.S. history have seen this discrepancy. Proponents also argue the system strengthens a president's mandate, as evidenced by President Obama's 2012 victory, where he secured a more significant portion of electoral votes than the popular vote (ProCon.org; Posner, 2012; Nichols, 2015).

Differing Perspectives

The cons of the Electoral College outweigh the pros. In a democracy, each adult should have one vote, but in the U.S., only 538 electors decide the president. Faithless electors sometimes vote based on preference, undermining the popular vote. For instance, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by over a million in 2016, but Trump won the Electoral College. Even Trump preferred the popular vote system on *60 Minutes*, saying, "I would rather see it where you went with simple votes...you get 100 million votes and somebody else gets 90 million votes and you win" (Stahl, 2016).

It is concerning that campaigns have convinced Americans the Electoral College is better. Unlike congressional elections, where the popular vote chooses officials, the presidential election doesn't reflect this equality. A president should have a clear majority to act with a mandate, representing the people rightfully.

Third-Party Outreach

Beyond the Rules and Administration Committee in the House and Senate, other organizations — including the Brennan Center for Justice, Bipartisan Policy Center, FairVote, and the MacArthur Foundation — can get involved. For example, the MacArthur Foundation's Elections Technology Project involves state legislators and election officials discussing improvements in election administration (MacArthur Foundation, 2014).

Engaging these influential organizations can help push for Electoral College reform, as they can convey concerns to federal officials more effectively. Powerful entities tend to listen to other powerful entities, leveraging their influence to ensure fair elections. It aligns with American pluralism, where special interests can shape government actions (Davidson et al., 2022). Although individual efforts can feel daunting, using think tanks and policy groups can amplify our impact.

Potential Challenges

Proposing Electoral College reform faces significant roadblocks. The Democratic Party supports reform, believing the current system disadvantages minorities, a crucial part of their voter base. The Republican Party, benefiting from the Electoral College, generally opposes changes. Conservative think tanks may also launch lobbying campaigns against reform. Some Republican senators, however, support the 2022 Electoral Reform Count to prevent election disputes like in 2020. Senators and representatives might fear backlash and reelection challenges, making them hesitant to support the bill.

Despite these challenges, advocating for reform is crucial to ensuring every vote counts equally and restoring trust in the electoral system. Proportional voting would allocate electors based on the popular vote in each state, moving closer to the ideal of "one person, one vote" (Davidson et al., 2022; MacArthur Foundation, 2014). Engaging the Rules and Administration Committee is essential for passing this reform and enhancing U.S. democracy.

Electoral Reform in 2024: A Presidential Rematch

As the 2024 presidential election approaches, the Biden-Trump rematch has intensified calls for electoral reform. It has highlighted the vulnerabilities of the Electoral College, which critics argue distorts the democratic process by giving disproportionate power to smaller swing states. This system can undermine public trust by allowing the popular vote winner to lose the presidency.

Bipartisan support is growing for measures to enhance electoral integrity and transparency, such as the Electoral Count Reform and Presidential Transition Improvement Act of 2022. Public opinion increasingly favors a national popular vote, with advocacy from organizations like FairVote and the Brennan Center for Justice. Despite challenges from entrenched interests and procedural hurdles, heightened awareness and advocacy offer a pathway to a more equitable electoral system. The 2024 election is critical for addressing these issues and restoring trust in the democratic process.

The 2024 U.S. election underscores the critical role of election laws, reigniting concerns about future election integrity and the role of the Electoral College. The current electorate, marked by skepticism and polarization, demands transparency and fairness, making electoral reform essential to restoring public trust. Comprehensive reforms are necessary to enhance election fairness, accuracy, and inclusivity, fostering a more inclusive democracy and upholding democratic principles effectively.



Galapagos “Community First Grants” Marine Conservation

BY JOEY JUNG AND NICHOLAS KUO

The Galapagos Islands are home to a diverse and vulnerable population of wildlife and habitats. They are also home to 30,000 people, who live in a balance with the environment around them. In parallel, the Galapagos Marine Reserve is praised as one of the world’s largest conserved marine areas; however, recent exploits in illegal fishing of endangered animals, introduction of invasive species, and tourist influx threatens its biodiversity and sustainability.¹

One of the most noteworthy developments in the Galapagos over the past year has been the announcement of a massive “blue bond” secured by the Ecuadorian government.² This deal, made between the government, investment bank Credit Suisse, and facilitated and insured by various international finance institutions, converted \$1.6 billion of national debt into bonds, with the returns invested into a trust that will provide millions for marine-based conservation efforts in the Galapagos.

The deal has been lauded as a win-win for all involved parties: the government reduces national debt, investors are provided a new opportunity for social impact investing in ocean-related activities, and the Galapagos receives millions of sustainability funding.³ However, the deal has been criticized for its lack of transparency and inclusion of local interests. In fact, the organization set up to spend the conservation funds, the Galapagos Life Fund, will be run by 6 “nonprofit and private appointees” but only 5 Ecuadorian officials, raising concerns regarding disconnect and fragmentation.⁴

Our proposal will attempt to remedy that issue while also addressing another important and related issue area: including Galapagonians with important decision-making processes about the future of the Galapagos Marine Reserve while also boosting local opportunities for education and engagement with marine conservation efforts.

We propose that the Galapagos Life Fund create a specialized **Community First Grant**, which will disburse grants targeted towards increasing opportunities for Galapagonians, including:

I. Funding for marine-based educational experiences, including field trips, scholarships, and internships that support the Galapagos National Park Administration and their management of the Galapagos Marine Reserve;

II. Funding for new initiatives started by locals, such as eco-startups, volunteer organizations, and businesses targeted at Galapagos ocean conservation;

III. Funding for existing organizations such as the Galapagos Conservation Trust and Galapagos Conservancy, focused on hiring and engaging the local Galapagonian community in their ongoing research for marine conservation.

The Community Grant disbursement committee will be made up of a majority of Galapagos residents. Funding will either be allocated from the bond revenue or set up through a large private donation placed into the endowment. Our goal is to allocate \$1 million dollars a year from the fund’s projected \$12 million perpetuity for disbursement. Our proposal employs an endowment fund driven by “blue bonds” to ensure a sustainable source of financing toward Galapagonian community engagement. We aim to achieve long-term sustainability of marine conservation efforts by investing in the next generation of local leaders and civilians.

Case Studies

In this section, we detail two case studies to further inform and contextualize our proposal. Firstly, we will explore the first “blue bond” ever issued in the Seychelles Islands to shed light on how the Galapagos Life Fund should function to engage local communities in conservation efforts, as well as some notable shortcomings. Secondly, we explore a more modern success story of the “blue bond” in Barbados and how the fund relies on local Barbadian engagement for decision-making. Finally, we land back in the Galapagos to assess the successes and shortcomings of similar efforts run by organizations currently on the island.

Seychelles: Green Financing for the Blue Ocean

The Seychelles, an island nation off the coast of East Africa, was the first country to export the “green bond” model to a project primarily dealing with ocean conservation. Green bonds were started in 2008 by the World Bank to provide safe and attractive financing targeted towards investments in climate change adaptation and mitigation for developing countries, such as solar panel grids or sustainable forest management.⁵ For countries with high debt or limited capital raising capabilities, green bonds provide financing on good terms and guarantees by reliable third parties, allowing environmentally-conscious investors to put their money in impactful projects while still making a healthy return.

In 2018, Seychelles exported that model to protect its oceans and coastlines. As a low-lying island country, rising sea levels put 90% of their population and critical infrastructure at risk.⁶ Concurrently, their oceans are fighting the consequences of climate change as well as overexploitation, including overfishing and pollution.⁷ However, with projected costs to address these issues at \$600 million — 5% of the nation’s entire GDP — they have been exploring innovative financing solutions, with one of them being blue bonds.

With assistance from the IMF and World Bank, Seychelles raised \$15 million USD to set up the Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT) and the Development Bank of Seychelles, which will distribute grants and loans for 10 years with the goal of “expanding marine protected areas, improved governance of priority fisheries and the development of the Seychelles’ blue economy.”⁸ They also allocated money for educational programs and sustainable economic development within the country.

Seychelles met their target of increasing marine protection areas to 30% around the island, attributing their success to their blue economy.⁹

Notably, funds distributed by SeyCCAT included grants towards educational initiatives. These included:

I. Blue Education: Youth education through development of curriculum and workbook.

II. Accelerator Program: 20 entrepreneurs started 10 businesses related to climate sustainability. For example, entrepreneur John Nevill received over \$36,500 USD to a business to analyze parrotfish’s positive impact on the coral reef ecosystem.¹⁰

III. Internship Program: Funding for Seychelles Youth to engage with organizations within the “Blue Economy,” or a commitment to a sustainable economic relationship with the ocean.¹¹

While Seychelles’ investment of blue funds into local initiatives inform how Galapagos Life Fund should proceed, there are increasing concerns regarding the disconnect between the decision-making of the blue economy and the interests of local community members. For instance, the Seychelles government began initiatives for aquaculture to stimulate the blue economy by giving monitored licenses to mass breed, raise, and farm fish species. Yet, this has created pushback from locals, since increased availability of fish brings down its price and harms fishermen.¹² Seychelles serves as an important case study into the potential of blue bonds to fuel local engagement initiatives, as well as the risk of alienating local communities.

Barbados: Local Stakeholders in Decision-Making of Blue Bonds

Inspired by Seychelles’ blue bond initiative and facing similar sustainability issues as the Galapagos, Barbados has arranged for a blue debt-for-nature swap of its own, with \$146.5 million of blended finance blue loans issued by Credit Suisse in September 2022.¹³ This endowment is projected to yield an aggregate \$50 million into Barbados’ ocean conservation initiatives over the course of 15 years. Half of Barbados’ blue fund has been allocated toward a five-year marine spatial plan (MSP), which will dedicate 30% of Barbados’ coastal waters — or 55,000 square kilometers — as exclusive economic zones by 2050.¹⁴

Barbados’ MSP exemplifies the delicate balance between preserving economic development of local communities with the necessity to protect marine biodiversity despite the risk of interfering with the livelihoods of locals such as divers, fishermen, and tour guides. Unlike Seychelles’ blue bond

governance which generally viewed local community members as the end beneficiaries of the fund, Barbados actively involves local stakeholders within the management of the fund's disbursements, thereby addressing concerns about whether blue economies truly serve local civilians.

Leading Barbados' MSP is the Marine Spatial Plan Steering Committee, composed of members of the Nature Conservancy, Barbados government officials, and local stakeholders. The committee unifies local leaders from varying economic sectors ranging from fishing, seaweed farming, tourism,



diving, oil-and-gas development, and renewable energy.¹⁵ Thus, local communities have a powerful voice in dictating how the MSP will balance the interests of various economic sectors while protecting ecologically impactful marine areas.

In 2023, Barbados' Blue Bond earned high praise by winning Sustainability Bond of the Year from the Environmental Finance organization, a testament to Barbados' commitment not only to marine conservation but also its strategic inclusion of all local economic sectors within the decision-making process of its blue economy.¹⁶

Galapagos Today: Successes and Areas of Improvement

There are various programs run by private organizations in the Galapagos that do similar work as we propose, but at a much smaller scale. The Galapagos Conservation Trust runs the most comprehensive program, targeting children at various developmental stages with different educational and experiential interventions, including classroom resources, field trips, and more.¹⁷

They also provide grants for research, internships, and grants for Galapagonians looking to engage with the National Park, economically diversify, and build impactful projects and businesses. The Galapagos Conservatory also provides Conservation Action Grants, usually around \$5,000, for locals to create sustainable solutions for mitigating the effects of El Niño.¹⁸

The topic of local community engagement in the Seychelles and Barbados case studies informs our assessment of the Galapagos' situation. We believe we can create a well-funded and well-organized funnel for youth into sustainable and conservation-oriented jobs and mindsets while expanding opportunities through the creation of new businesses, positions, and initiatives.

Key Questions:

1. What percent of Galapagonians have had a meaningful trip into the National Park?
2. How much are local issues around conservation and the environment included in the primary school curriculum?
3. What percent of schoolchildren do current educational initiatives reach?
4. What is the breakdown of industry and jobs within the local population? How does that differ across islands?
5. What are the future prospects for young Galapagonians?

Pilot Project & Final Thoughts

Our pilot project will utilize a three step approach. First, we propose that the Galapagos Life Fund allocate an estimated \$1 million USD out of their \$12 million in blue fund perpetuity towards a grant, which we have tentatively coined as "Community First Grants." Second, management of the pilot project will be designated to a committee consisting mostly of local Galapagonian leaders in different economic sectors, inspired by the aforementioned success of Barbados' MSP Committee. This will allow the local community to have a voice during the decision-making process for conservation efforts that impact their local economies. Third, the Community First Grants should be invested into a three-pronged community engagement model, aimed at reworking the existing marine conservation model and empowering local Galapagonian residents to play a greater role in protecting Galapagos' oceans. The merits of both the allocation of the blue fund and the Galapagonian-led grant committee rely on the efficacy, feasibility, and impact of the three-pronged community engagement model.

If this initiative is successful, we expect to see increased opportunities for Galapagonians to engage, learn about, and work within the Galapagos Marine Reserve and marine conservation efforts. We hope that a recurring financial commitment for the Galapagonian people will complement the

investments made into its flora, fauna, and environment. Ideally, our idea would be one step towards the increased harmonization of economic, environmental, and social interests on the island.

We hope to boost the number of jobs within marine conservation, increase the number of field trips for the youth (and, eventually, the adult population), and increase the proportion of local residents within the organizations and bodies that make decisions for the Galapagos. We hope that through better survey data of the residents, the Ecuadorian government and other organizations can better integrate the preferences of them, as well as gauge their success at increasing community engagement.

Finally, we will lobby the Galapagos Life Fund to formally pledge an investment of a set percent of annual grant disbursements to continue flowing towards community initiatives, and expect this to significantly improve outcomes of residents over time.



INTERVIEW WITH REAR ADMIRAL PAUL REED

Rear Admiral (RDML) Paul Reed, MD is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health, the Director of the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, a pediatrician, and a senior U.S. Public Health Service Officer. His primary responsibility is to advise the Assistant Secretary for Health on disease prevention and health promotion programs and policies pursuant to Title XVII, Section 1701, of the Public Health Service Act. Additionally, RDML Reed provides direction and oversight for national health initiatives such as Healthy People 2030, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, the whole of government resilience initiative – People and Places Thriving, and the President’s Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition.

1. What first inspired you to pursue a career path at the intersection of public policy, healthcare, and military service?

I’d like to say that my career path was by design, but it wasn’t! In terms of early inspiration, though, I can remember when I was a teenager that I always knew I wanted to be a pediatrician, and throughout college I became even more enamored by pediatric medicine. I was intrigued by evolutionary biology, fetal development, genetics, early childhood exposures, and family dynamics — all of which are things that play into clinical issues that children face. There was always something that drew me to working with children and their families. Thinking back about it, now, I believe much of my interest had to do with the complexity of children’s lives.

In my career, at first, I had a relatively narrow focus on pediatric medicine. I was also in a Navy uniform, however — the Navy supported me throughout medical school, and I served in the Navy for over 17 years. During that time, there were a lot of other opportunities for me that I never sought out or was necessarily trained for — but such is the nature of military service. Through these unanticipated and often unique experiences, I began to adopt a broader perspective on health and wellbeing, and I learned about and directly saw what really influences the lives of individuals and communities.

Without knowing it at the time, I became fascinated with the broader social circumstances of peoples’ lives. As the years went by, the aperture on my view of what I consider “health” to be and how it is realized has expanded — and continues to expand even to today, more than 30 years down the line. My career path took all sorts of different turns, and every change in my path was a new opportunity that was often unexpectedly valuable to me to add to that perspective. Though, frankly, I may not have always realized the value of those experiences until later on. I am blessed with the culmination of these varied experiences over the years, and I think it helps tremendously in my perspective on what makes good policy —



my primary focus today.

2. Could you speak a bit to your background as not only a pediatrician and Navy doctor by training, but also your involvement as an officer in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service? How have these experiences shaped your service-oriented leadership?

I would look at these things in reverse. I think it’s being service-minded that has led to my involvement in pediatric clinical care, Navy medicine, operational medicine, global health, humanitarian assistance work, disaster-related health, and even policymaking in health and wellbeing. All of these career opportunities and my perspectives on these issues largely came about and are inspired by my service-driven nature. The credit for that goes to my parents! My father was a career Navy officer and my mother was a lifelong schoolteacher. It was their commitment and service that I witnessed all the time in my years growing up that was ingrained in me.

As a pediatrician, service-mindedness was very heartfelt for me. Whether I was at the bedside or in the clinic space engaging with children and their families, I always felt centered on the needs of the patient and their parents. That was what really drove me as a healthcare provider.

As my career progressed, my personal views on what makes us healthy — what I like to describe as “where we find health” — has only expanded. My perspective on what it means to serve has also evolved.

At this stage of my career, you can argue that my current position — in leading the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in the Department of Health and Human Services — focuses on nothing short of the health of the nation. This is, in my mind, a responsibility to serve every American. The mandate of our office that I’m blessed to lead is to directly translate science into good guidance and practice that can benefit the average American in advancing their own health and wellbeing and influence systems to support Americans in being healthy and to thrive.

When I add up the experiences of my career — call it a path or having gone off the beaten path, either way — it all tracks in my mind! Regardless of the role I was actively participating in at any point in my career, being service-oriented in my mindset likely influenced my actions more than anything.

3. Could you speak a bit more to your work at the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, especially with the growing emphasis on disease prevention rather than disease care and intervention?

I would even take this one step further — or even ten steps further! Our office title is the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, but I always argue that my perspective ventures much further upstream than the title suggests. While our mandate is specifically to advance the health and wellbeing of the nation by speaking to good health practices — an example of this would be the provision of dietary guidelines, which is one of our core programs — I believe our ability to be successful in our mission demands a much broader perspective on the things that enable us to be healthy.

This goes beyond a disease-centric model — one that reflects the 150-plus year legacy of our healthcare system. In fact, I’m reluctant to use the term “healthcare system” in the traditional sense because we, in effect, have a “disease-care system” — and it does not advance health.

We spend roughly \$4.5 trillion annually in the United States on what we call healthcare — that represents almost 18% of our gross domestic product and is an enormous investment. Yet in effect, that investment goes almost entirely towards disease management. Some of this is preventing disease, but the overwhelming majority is treating disease once it has manifested.

This does not work. By every measure of what defines a healthy nation, we are well behind our peer nations. Whether you look at life expectancy at birth, obesity rates, maternal mortality — we are at the bottom of the rankings in all these metrics. Yet, we invest an enormous amount of money and resources in this direction. This is the nature and legacy of American healthcare.

As such, our office must look entirely outside of what we traditionally think of as the healthcare system — we must speak to what actually does make us healthy and where we “find” health. And this manifests across our daily lives in where we live, where we work, where we play, and where we find spiritual sanctuary.

The things that we constitute as “living” are the true places, situations, environments, and social circumstances that either enable us or prevent us from being healthy and to thrive.

4. In a post-COVID America, we often speak about Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience (ELTRR). How do you feel we can trend towards a healthier country for all people and move more “upstream” as a health system?

This is a huge part of what we do, helping to advocate for what we now refer to as the Federal Plan for People and Places Thriving. We evolved and matured the name of this federal plan to demonstrate how it has relevance in perpetuity and is not entirely tied to the pandemic response and recovery plan — which was where the original name of this initiative, Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience (ELTRR), stemmed from.

This federal plan helps orient all of government to think about the resources that federal agents employ, and to outline what the value proposition is for executing whatever federal resources are needed by communities — be it policy, funding opportunities, or technical assistance. The value proposition that underpins this federal plan is defined in the framework of the Vital Conditions for Health, Wellbeing, and Justice — which establishes the necessary circumstances for individuals and communities that enable wellbeing, enhance resilience, and promote thriving.

You can think of this all as an expansion of the Social Determinants of Health model — a new way of thinking centered on actions rather than being a descriptive framework. The Vital Conditions framework evolves this perspective and focuses more on the actions that can be taken to accentuate crucial needs and therefore improve upon the lives of all Americans. The People and Places Thriving federal plan helps instill a set of recommendations for any government agency to apply, to better enhance outcomes in these vital conditions.

This effort is analogous to something that has existed in civil society before the pandemic, the initiative referred to as Thriving Together. This initiative also leverages the Vital Conditions framework, allowing both federal and non-federal stakeholders to share a common language and approach to helping communities. Overall, this helps orient everyone toward a philosophical agenda that equitably enhances the lives of Americans.

5. We often see how politics influences healthcare, and how healthcare influences policy. How does your office keep the focus on healthy living and health promotion in the midst of a turbulent political climate?

First and foremost, we must be mindful that there exist “big P” policies and “little p” policies — both of which influence policymaking, programs, and funding opportunities in unique ways and across different domains. They certainly affect the ways in which we think about, talk about, and resource healthcare.

Although our office is part of the federal government, we are not a political entity — and our mandate is something that is truly bipartisan, in my mind. It is hard to imagine a political agenda that would argue against a healthier America. The way in which we pursue the achievement of this healthier America may have a lot of variation depending on the politics of the day, but the endgame is ultimately apolitical — one that strives to make communities healthier and more resilient.

Regrettably, over the past few years we have come to learn just how little resilience we have. But it was not the pandemic that caused the problems. It merely laid bare the problems that have existed long before the pandemic occurred. It behooves us to take the lessons that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us and make the claim for system-level change, at every level of government and society, that is intentional toward improving people's lives.

I often reference the Preamble to the Constitution when I discuss the work our office strives to achieve. The clause I particularly refer to — “promote the general Welfare” — is something I believe we have lost sight of over the years. We certainly have lost a common understanding of what this line truly means and why government exists to act on it.

I think that if we have learned anything from the pandemic, we must acknowledge that we have not paid enough attention to promoting the general welfare, for quite some time now. And we have suffered as a result — not just because of the pandemic, due to some emerging biological threat that came into our lives, but because of the pre-existing lack of resilience we have had. This is attributable to our social circumstances, the burden of comorbid conditions we live with as a society, and how all of this is not being addressed in the way that it needs to be.

6. Could you speak a bit more to your work in spearheading Healthy People 2030?

I consider it an honor to have this responsibility! I often describe Healthy People 2030 as the cornerstone of public health. I say this because the Healthy People initiative has had decades of history setting the objectives we seek to improve upon across issues of health and wellbeing.

Ever since its beginnings in the 1980s, it has continued to evolve, decade-in and decade-out. In fact, it has very much evolved in a way that reflects this new and expanded view of what's required to be healthy — with an increasingly “upstream” focus that emphasizes social determinants and the vital conditions.

Our office considers everything we do in the context of Healthy People 2030 — now in its fifth iteration — because of the standard this initiative sets. It provides a frame of reference for not only all levels of government but also for civil society. It poses a set of objectives to which industry, private businesses, and even academia can look to help improve upon the most concerning health issues within our communities.

8. What is your advice to the youth and college students of today who are interested in public health? What do you think are the main policy and health challenges that today's youth will be confronted with in the coming years?

One piece of advice that I always give when I mentor students is to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves to you. Do not be too prescriptive with your career development or education to ignore an opportunity when it smacks you in the face! This has been the story of my career, and I could not be more thankful for all of the opportunities that I took advantage of. Now, much of this I was directed to do — and I wouldn't have necessarily thought to seek such opportunities for myself — but it all added up!

For those who are particularly interested in public health and its related fields, there is a great reference from 2017. The de Beaumont Foundation pulled a group of experts together to entertain what the future of the public health system would demand of leaders. They produced a document that refers to the numerous specialized skills typical of what you think of as skills within public health — epidemiology, maternal health, communicable disease prevention, and other familiar fields.

But the report's key focus and what is truly going to be demanded in the future — and this has certainly been reinforced by our pandemic experience — is a different yet complementary set of skills that are much more strategic. I was afforded the opportunity to adopt these skills by chance, but at the front end of your education and career, it behooves you to think about all this. These strategic skills include things like systems thinking — pondering the wicked solutions to the wicked problems we face — regarding health, wellbeing, thriving, and resilience. The answers are far from simple, given they will demand a level of complexity that goes beyond any one of us. But the more you can adopt systems-level thinking, the more it will favor you and your long-term professional journey.

There are a number of other strategic skills highlighted by the de Beaumont report, but I will highlight one that I think is particularly important — change management. Do not be afraid to push the envelope! We are not going to improve the health of individuals and communities in America by staying the course. What we refer to as our “healthcare” system is failing, it is not leading to a healthier nation. We need change agents — we need people to think much more broadly, to think well outside the traditional healthcare model, and look into the lives of people to enhance their ability to thrive.

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