

# Here is how we save American democracy



TNS

Robert Reich writes that the next 14 months will be critical to the survival of the American system of democracy, and that individual action is essential.





Robert Reich

The week after Labor Day weekend usually signals the start of a return to serious business — summer vacations over and kids back to school, fiscal years ending and new ones beginning, cleaning up and battening down for winter.

This particular week after Labor Day also marks the start of a terrifyingly high-stakes ride for America — five months until the beginning of the primaries, eight until Donald Trump’s trial for seeking to overturn the 2020 election, 10 until the Republican convention, in which Trump is almost certain to be nominated, 14 until the presidential election of 2024.

All the while, Trump and House Republicans will be throwing up every conceivable distraction and roadblock — threatening to or actually closing the government, impeaching President Joe Biden, and holding more hearings on “woke” capitalism, Hunter Biden, the alleged “weaponization” of the Justice Department and the FBI.

At this point, the polls are too close for comfort.

The question we must all ask ourselves, I believe, is what can we do between now and the election to help save American democracy? Let me try out a few answers:

- Do everything within your power to ensure that Trump is not reelected president. For some of us, this will mean taking time out of our normal lives to become more directly politically involved — up to and including moving to a critical swing state.
- Do not succumb to the tempting anesthetics of complacency or cynicism. The stakes are too high. Even if you cannot take much time out of your normal life for direct politics, you will need to organize, mobilize and energize your friends, colleagues and neighbors.
- Counter lies with truth. When you hear someone repeating a Trump Republican lie, correct it. Which will require that you prepare yourself with facts, logic, analysis and sources.
- Do not tolerate bigotry and hate. Call it out. Stand up to it. Denounce it. Demand that others denounce it, too.
- Do not resort to violence, name-calling, bullying or any of the other tactics that Trump followers may be using.
- Be compassionate toward hardcore followers of Trump, but be firm in your opposition. Understand why someone may decide to support Trump, but don't waste your time and energy trying to convert them. Use your time and energy on those who still have open minds.
- Don't waste your time and energy commiserating with people who already agree with you. Don't gripe, whine, wring your hands and kvetch with other progressives about how awful Trump and his Republican enablers are. Don't snivel over or criticize Biden and the Democrats for failing to communicate more effectively how bad Trump and his Republican enablers are. None of this will get you anything except an upset stomach or worse.
- Demonstrate, but don't mistake demonstrating for political action. You may find it gratifying to stand on a corner in Berkeley with a sign asking drivers to “honk if you hate fascism” and elicit lots of honks, but that's as politically effectual as taking a warm shower. Organize people who don't normally vote to vote for Biden. Mobilize get-out-the-vote efforts in your community. Get young people involved.
- Don't get deflected by the latest sensationalist post or story by or about Trump. Don't let the media's short-term attention span divert your eyes from the prize — the survival of American democracy during one of the greatest stress tests it has had to endure, organized by one of the worst demagogues in American history.

I cannot overstate how critical the outcome of the next 14 months will be to everything we believe in. And the importance of your participation. I will be with you every step of the way.

Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of “The System: Who Rigged It, How We Fix It.” Read more at [robertreich.substack.com/](http://robertreich.substack.com/)

©2023 Robert Reich. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency LLC