

## A democracy or a republic?

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Words matter: both meaning and intent. The way some are using the idea that “the Founders established a republic, instead of a democracy,” smacks of subterfuge. Of course, the Founders did not want “mob rule,” a simple majority of the entire voting population deciding every issue, every bit of legislation –duh. That would be ridiculous, and almost nothing on a state or national level would get done. The Founders rightly called that so-called “pure” or absolute democracy unworkable, and to still battle that in print today is using the proverbial straw man.

So, it’s more than a bit disingenuous for some to pretend superior wisdom by so often quoting Ben Franklin on the republic and to invoke a lengthy qualification every time to spell it out for us. It’s somewhat as if we should always be expected to use the technically correct scientific name for our horses, *Equus caballus*, explaining that we do not mean *Equus przewalski* from Mongolia or that there have been many other genera and species of horses, some even with three toes on each foot. As with dogs, cats, and fish, too, Americans know them when they see them (and say them), and much the same is true of democracy.

Meanwhile, absorbed and distracted by semantics (is that the intent?), what is overlooked is that the country has little protection against candidates who flood media, mail, and debates with truckloads of lies to get elected --ostensibly to “represent” us in this republic-- and then say and do the opposite. Where is the angst about that? (False promises have a long, long history. Ask Native Americans about their ancestors’ experience with representatives of the government concerning treaties. As one chief said, “They only kept one promise: they promised to take our land and they took it.”)

Our nation’s foremost historians often use the term “representative democracy,” wherein most things can be decided by elected officials authorized to act on our behalf. They also --and often-- use “democracy” when communicating about the intent or spirit of our political process, which is meant to safeguard everyone’s rights, the many and the few. Jefferson may or may not have said, “Eternal vigilance is the safeguard of democracy,” but we “get” that sentiment so often attributed to him.

Donald Trump wants to take away the constitutional power of the states to run elections. (Look for some “national emergency” declaration.) Failing that, there is ongoing preparation for a false elector scheme 2.0. Overturning the will of the people is exactly what was attempted on the Jan 6<sup>th</sup> attack –the strongest attack from within on our country since the Civil War. Not certifying the actual outcome of the election is what Mike Pence was being pressured to do by a lying, deranged, and corrupt outgoing president, all the while the crowd was brutalizing police, shouting “Hang Mike Pence,” and putting up gallows on the Capitol steps.

Right now, there are signs of multifaceted preparations for another coup attempt that would kneecap the great declarations and documents we celebrated on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Shouldn’t we be hearing about this from those who claim both to love our Republic and to know its intent? Russia and

North Korea have elections, but they are meaningless. It is naïve to think that we are immune to such dangers.

In any case, make no mistake --whether we call it a democracy, a republic, or a representative democracy-- the main thing is this: Donald Trump doesn't want it. He regards himself as The Decider and wants no checks and balances of any kind. The proverbial elephant in the room is his continual acting as though those three co-equal branches of government mandated by our Constitution should not exist. Rather, we hear him lie that his deals, phone calls, and IQ are all "perfect," as he rails against the rule of law, saying that judges who make decisions that he doesn't like or that news networks that are actually practicing freedom of speech "should be illegal." Often, he sues or simply fails to obey the law. Justice, intended to be blind to fear and favor, right now, is under huge threat.

Thus, Trump's claims of sweeping authority are increasingly bizarre and contrary to the very essence of the country we love. He has said "I am the only one that matters. ...I rule the country and I rule the world" and "You shouldn't have to vote again." Not long ago, he even stated, "Sometimes you need a dictator." Republican writers need to stop going down this republic rabbit-hole to provide cover for a president who has never been more unpresidential, never more a danger, and never more against both the letter and the spirit of "our democracy."

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