

Democracy is on the ballot

Presidential candidates outline must be done to save our republic

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The following analysis is part of The Washington Times' Voter Guide, which outlines the candidates' positions on the most important policy topics.

Vice President Kamala Harris is running against former President Donald Trump in more ways than one. The core of her message to voters is "I'm not him." She's willing to do whatever it takes to prevent Mr. Trump from returning to the White House.

"I do believe the American people are ready to turn the page on the divisiveness and the type of rhetoric that has come out of Donald Trump. People are ready to chart a new way forward," she told Fox News' Bret Baier.

Ms. Harris cites the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol as an example of why she believes Mr. Trump can't be allowed back.

"Let us be very clear," she said in Las Vegas in August. "Someone who suggests we should terminate the Constitution of the United States should never again stand behind the seal of president of the United States. Never again."

She added Democratic election lawyer Mark Elias to her campaign team after he nearly succeeded in throwing the former president off the ballot in several states. The effort was quashed by a unanimous Supreme Court ruling in March.

The Biden-Harris administration also tried to reduce Mr. Trump's chance at victory by sending him to prison before voters had a chance to weigh in. Matthew Colangelo, the former third-ranking official at the Department of Justice, was dispatched to New York Attorney General Alvin Bragg's office to oversee the first-ever felony prosecution of a former president.

Under a judicial gag order, Mr. Trump is not allowed to mention Mr. Colangelo's role or his ties to the administration and Ms. Harris. At the federal level, the Department of Justice has also sought and obtained gag orders restricting the former president's speech.



White House officials are working with social media companies to suppress more political speech, with the approval of Ms. Harris. “And the only thing that is left is making sure people have the correct information, the correct information and not misinformation,” the vice president said at a vaccination event in 2021.

The administration’s work against “misinformation” includes applying the full weight of the federal government to investigate and fine Elon Musk. At least 11 separate agencies have opened proceedings against his companies, including X, Tesla, Neuralink and SpaceX. The billionaire entrepreneur came under fire after he purchased Twitter and subsequently endorsed Mr. Trump for president.

In the view of Ms. Harris, extreme measures are necessary because the stakes are so high. “Understand, when we talk about ‘democracy is on the ballot,’ it is,” the vice president said.

At the first Summit for Democracy in the White House, Ms. Harris asserted: “Around the world, autocrats have become emboldened. Human rights violations have multiplied. And corruption is undermining progress. And misinformation is undermining public confidence.”

Mr. Trump would counter that each of those charges applies to the United States under the current administration. Former White House adviser Steve Bannon is in jail for citing executive privilege in refusing to cooperate with the Jan. 6 congressional committee.

At the recent Al Smith Memorial Foundation dinner, Mr. Trump even spoke sympathetically of the plight of New York’s Democratic mayor, Eric Adams, who was indicted after he criticized the administration’s immigration policy. “I’d like to poke some fun at Eric, but I’m going to be nice. I just want to be nice because I know what it’s like to be persecuted by the DOJ for speaking out against open borders.

We were persecuted, Eric,” Mr. Trump said. “The Democrats have been telling us Trump’s reelection is a threat to democracy,” comic Jim Gaffigan observed at the event. “In fact, they were so concerned of this threat, they staged a coup, ousted their democratically elected incumbent and installed Kamala Harris.” In Mr. Trump’s view, a second term in office would allow him to finish the job of “draining the swamp” of undemocratic characters. Mr. Musk has agreed to become a government efficiency czar to find creative ways to put Uncle Sam on a muchneeded diet.

Congress would also be affected. The former president proposes to ban former members from becoming lobbyists and trading stocks with the inside information they gather on the job.

To restore the integrity of elections, Mr. Trump says he would end political prosecutions, restore free speech and push for laws to ensure voters are who they say they are before they're handed a ballot. He'd also eliminate ballot harvesting and drop boxes.

"Our goal will be one-day voting with paper ballots, proof of citizenship and a thing called voter ID," Mr. Trump said at a recent rally in Montana. "They don't want voter ID. ... There's only one reason you don't want identification. You want to cheat."

Voters will decide which candidate has a better grasp of the ideals of our constitutional republic