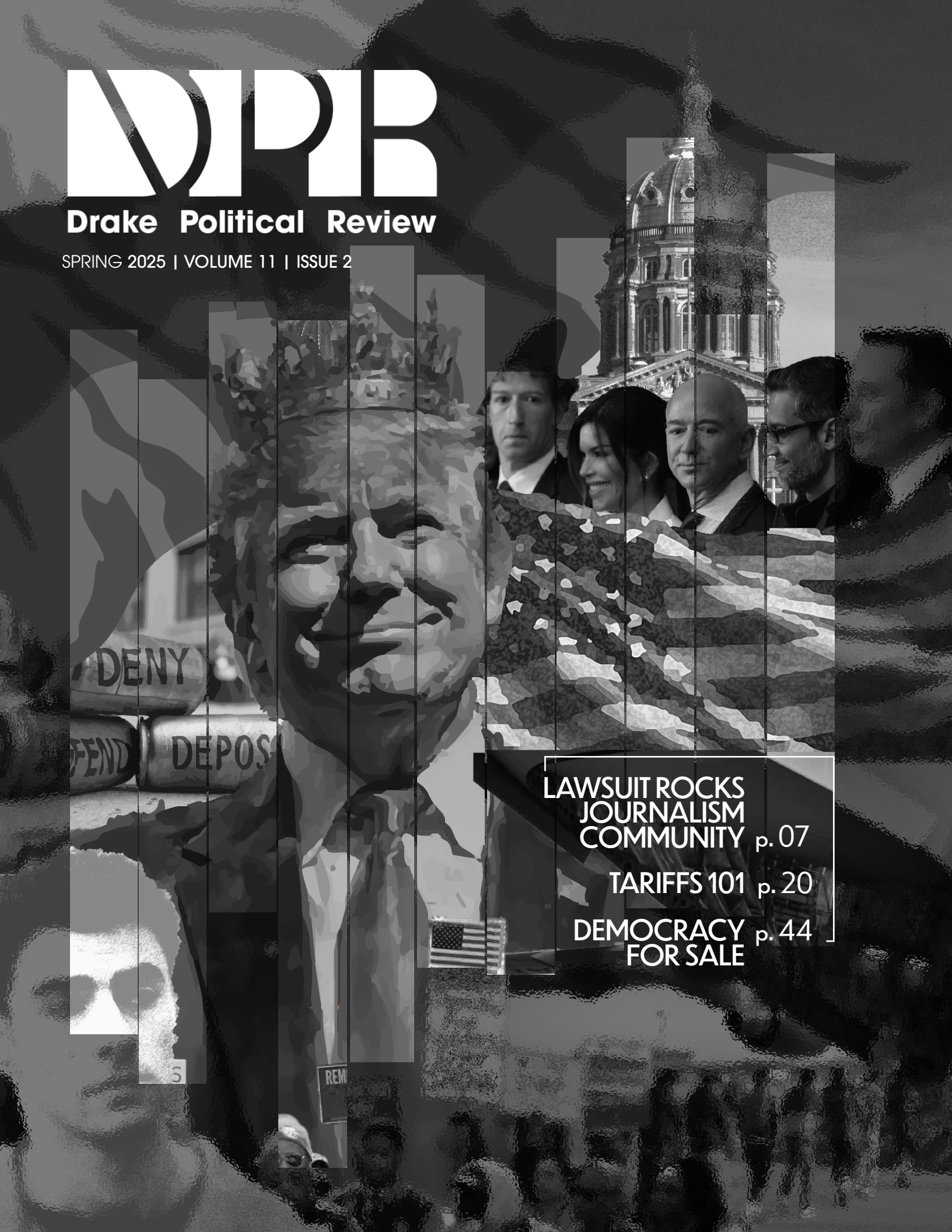
DPR

Drake Political Review

SPRING 2025 | VOLUME 11 | ISSUE 2



LAWSUIT ROCKS JOURNALISM COMMUNITY p. 07

TARIFFS 101 p. 20

DEMOCRACY FOR SALE p. 44

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Reader,

Not to state the obvious, but a lot is happening in the world currently. No matter your political beliefs, these are weird, dark, scary, exciting, unprecedented and ultimately confusing times.

In order to address all these emotions, this issue of DPR has a little of everything for everyone. From explaining what the heck a tariff is, to some light-hearted political drama surrounding fish (who knew people were so passionate about fish?), to goofy presidential slogans, all while at the same time addressing the serious issues around the country and the world.

This magazine would not be possible if not for our amazing team of writers, editors and designers whose hard work can be seen on every page of this issue.

I would like to thank Tyler, our art director, for her wonderful job leading the design team this year. She has done a lot, dealt with a lot, and through it all, has designed two beautiful issues of DPR. Thanks for all your work, and thanks for being a good friend. It's been a pleasure working beside you.

When I stepped onto Drake's campus for the first time, I never would've imagined I would be in this position four years later. It's hard to believe my time here is almost up, but I know I am leaving the magazine in good hands. It's been a privilege to serve as Editor-in-Chief of DPR this year.

Thank you to all my professors, advisors and friends for all the support and guidance I have received. I would not be where I am now without any of you.

It is now time for me to turn the page to the next chapter of my life.

I now invite you to turn this page and...

LET'S TALK POLITICS!

Parker Wright

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Special thanks to Jen Wilson, Lakshmi Tirumala, Amy McCoy, Jeff Inman, Kelly Bruhn, Jennifer Glover Konfrst, Gina Ryan and Catherine Staub for their support. Thank you to the Drake SJMC, Bill Leonhardt and everyone at Christian Edwards Printing for making this magazine possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IOWA BRED

FIELDS OF FEAR 04

LAWSUIT ROCKS JOURNALISM COMMUNITY 07

BIRD FLU IN IOWA 10

THE TRUTH BEHIND WINDMILLS 12

SOMETHING'S FISHY IN THE IOWA HOUSE 13

OVER STATE LINES

A DEI DISCONNECT 16

TARIFFS 101 20

THE EXECUTIVE FAST LANE 21

SAVING THE NATION 24

TRUMP'S TRUSTED WOMEN 26

RACY POLITICAL SLOGANS 28

POLITICIAN FYP 29

INDUSTRY IN SHAMBLES 30

ECHOS OF OUR POLITICAL PAST 34

THE PEN OR THE GAVEL? 36

ACROSS THE POND

AUTOCRACY CLOSE TO HOME? 37

MR. WORLDWIDE 40

DEMOCRACY FOR SALE! 44

AN ELECTION BIGGER THAN ONE COUNTRY 46

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AWARDS

HEARST

Feature Writing Nomination
JACK MALINSKI - SPRING 2024 ISSUE

Best Design Nomination
PAIGE MINOR - SPRING 2024 ISSUE

PINNACLE

1st Place Best Magazine Cover
PAIGE MINOR - FALL 2023 ISSUE

1st Place Best Editorial Illustration
PAIGE MINOR - FALL 2023 ISSUE

Honorable Mention Best Headline
EMILY ZELLER - FALL 2023 ISSUE

3rd Place Best Magazine News Page/Spread
PAIGE MINOR - FALL 2023 ISSUE

3rd Place Feature Magazine of the Year
MADELINE CRAWFORD - FALL 2023 ISSUE

2nd Place Best Magazine Entertainment
PAIGE MINOR - FALL 2023 ISSUE

PACEMAKER

2024 Pacemaker Finalist
FALL 2023 ISSUE

PARKER WRIGHT

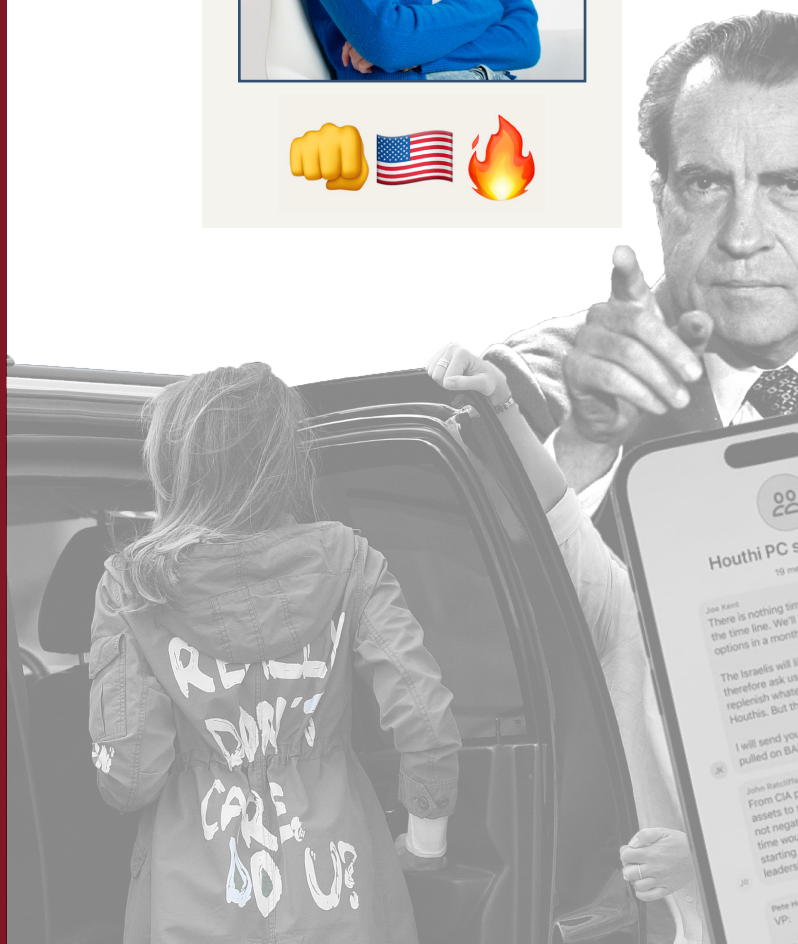


Obama's Tan Suit

TYLER STRACHAN



👊🇺🇸🔥



NORAH JUDSON



Melania Trump "I Really Don't Care, Do U?" Jacket at the Border

GRACE RILEY



Rudy G Fake Tan Sweat

OLIVIA KUFFEL



Chinese Spy Balloon

JACK MALINSKI



Watergate

EMILY ZELLER



Biden's America in One Word: Gibberish

EVE LOEHRER



That one time the vice president shot Alexander Hamilton

DPR's FAVORITE MESSY POLITICAL MOMENTS

FIELDS OF FEAR

WORDS PARKER WRIGHT
PHOTO & DESIGN TYLER STRACHAN



Iowans speak out against immigration policy under new Trump Administration.

When Shelby Schmitt woke up on the morning of Nov. 6, the first thing she did was check the election results from the night before. Instant fear washed over her as she read that Donald Trump had defeated Kamala Harris and been reelected president of the United States.



"I didn't fear for myself; I feared for my neighbors, my students, my colleagues," said Schmitt, a retired high school teacher from Ames, Iowa.

She expressed that, given President Trump's stance on immigration, she wasn't sure what the future would look like for the people in her life who weren't originally from the U.S.

"It's worse given the fact that I know these are people in this country legally, but they will still be targeted just because," Schmitt said.

Iowans Fight Back

On Jan. 25, the Iowa Party for Socialism and Liberation held a rally at the Iowa State Capitol to protest Trump's deportation plans. Over 100 people from across the state, including Schmitt, showed up to voice their support for the immigrant community and fight back against Trump and Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds' policies.

"We are standing together with people all across the country who have seen the attacks against immigrants and are determined to stand up. By being here today, we are showing Trump and his billionaire friends that we will not stay silent and let them turn our community members into villains," said a PSL member who only identified as Comrade Aya. "We will stand up to the billionaire agenda and stand with our immigrant community members against the attacks they have in store."

Aya, an immigrant who moved to the United States in 2015 — just one year before Trump was elected for the first time — said she joined millions of other people around the world to protest Trump once he was inaugurated in 2017.

She lived in New York at the time and joined over 2,000 other people in a march at JFK International Airport in Queens to protest Trump's Executive Order 13769, more commonly known as "The Muslim Ban."

"There's been a deliberate attempt to paint immigrants as criminals, to paint immigrants as somehow having the power to take away our jobs and our housing," Aya said. "The same people who are saying this are the ones who are taking away housing and jobs."

Another PSL member, who identified himself only as Comrade Jake, said that it is everyone's responsibility to "stay awake" and stay cognizant of what's happening until the next election. He admitted doing so would be a struggle, but it would be necessary.

"What does it mean to defend immigrants every single day? It means not speaking to the police. It means defending our neighbors. It means defending our co-workers. It means making safe spaces for our immigrants [and] claiming them as our families," Jake said. "Because after they come for the immigrants, they will come for each and every one of us. It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must care for each other and protect each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains."

Schmitt fears the damage is already done and that over the next four years, Trump will do "irreversible damage" to the United States.

"It doesn't help that we can't even feel safe in our homes here in Iowa. Our government has proven they don't care about us," Schmitt said. "No wonder so many people are flocking to Illinois or Minnesota."

The Other Side

Jacob Kaplon, a construction worker from Altoona, Iowa, was ecstatic to wake up to the news of Trump's reelection. He believes the country is headed in the direction it needs to be.

Kaplon was a lone counter-protestor at the Jan. 25 rally at the Iowa Capitol. Though he was severely outnumbered, he was not bothered.

"The fact of the matter is, America is for Americans. If you're not American, you don't belong here," Kaplon said.

Kaplon mainly stayed silent at the protest and just observed. He admitted to making fun of some of the protesters quietly under his breath.

"The people here are just misguided," Kaplon said. "They don't understand they are defending people who are stealing our jobs, our money, our food, raping our children [and] destroying what it means to be a true-blooded American."

Overall, Kaplon is excited for the next four years and thinks Trump will "restore America to what it once was."

"I hope [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] does their job," Kaplon said.

When reached for comment on deportation plans, ICE declined to comment.

Community Support

Though the sudden influx of anti-immigration policy may seem daunting, many programs are available to support and defend immigrants. One such program is the Refugee and Immigrant Advocacy and Strategic Taskforce, a subdivision of Des Moines' Human and Civil Rights Commission.

RIAS is currently focused on three main initiatives: housing assistance, research and development, and community engagement, where they host events and create spaces where immigrant and refugee voices can be heard.

Catalina Samaniego, the chair of RIAS, said that in the days following Trump's election, they held a statewide meeting to discuss strategies for the future.

> " Immigrants and refugees don't take away from our city, they enhance it. Their contributions don't erase or minimize those of longtime residents; they add to the beauty and strength of Des Moines. That's something worth fighting for. "
>
> **CATALINA SAMANIEGO,** CHAIR OF THE REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT ADVOCACY AND STRATEGIC TASK FORCE

> " Because after they come for the immigrants, they will come for each and every one of us. It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must care for each other and protect each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains. "
>
> **COMRADE JAKE,** IOWA PARTY FOR SOCIALISM AND LIBERATION

"We're moving forward assuming the worst, and so far, we've been proven right. Sanctuary areas have come under attack, and we've seen an increase in ICE interactions with legal residents across the state," Samaniego said.

Given that RIAS is a division of the City of Des Moines, it works efficiently to provide support to the city and the broader community. However, Samaniego did express concern about the state and federal levels going forward.

"I worry about the direction our state is headed. I fear we're moving away from values that foster empathy and inclusion — values that would naturally create a culture where more people support the work we do," Samaniego said.

Samaniego said there hasn't been community backlash against their work, but cultural shifts in politics and the spread of misinformation have been presenting themselves as barriers.

"I've never seen any valid data linking higher immigration rates to increased crime, despite the narratives some try to push," Samaniego said. "Des Moines has thrived because of its long history of embracing immigrant communities. If that were to change, I wouldn't be surprised if we saw negative economic consequences ripple through the region."

At the end of the day, RIAS exists to provide support and relief for immigrants and refugees. They aren't "scheming" to harm the city, as Samaniego puts it.

"What we do is simple: we help people. And most of the people we help are the most hardworking, law-abiding and patriotic individuals in Des Moines," Samaniego said.

Samaniego went on to say that she will continue to gather feedback, report to the city and take on extra projects because she wants it to be clear that those who are struggling deserve help.

"I wish I could sit down with every person who fears or resents what we do and show them the truth," Samaniego said. "Immigrants and refugees don't take away from our city, they enhance it. Their contributions don't erase or minimize those of longtime residents; they add to the beauty and strength of Des Moines. That's something worth fighting for."

LAWSUIT ROCKS JOURNALISM COMMUNITY

Unpacking Trump's Litigation against J. Ann Selzer and The Des Moines Register.

WORDS BEA GOODMAN **DESIGN** EMILY ZELLER

Brazen election interference, deceiving the public and influencing the presidential election. These are all claims that President Donald Trump has made against Iowa resident and renowned retired pollster J. Ann Selzer.

One of Trump's first lawsuits as president-elect — filed in December — hits close to home, naming The Des Moines Register, its parent company Gannett and Selzer as complicit in consumer fraud.

The lawsuit calls out Selzer's celebrated Iowa Poll, which predicted that Harris would win the presidential election in Iowa. Trump ended up winning the state by more than 13 points — a large margin of error for someone as accomplished as Selzer.

This uncharacteristic discrepancy is the basis of Trump's lawsuit against Selzer and the Register.

By publishing this poll, Trump believes Selzer and the Register violated the Iowa Consumer Fraud Act. He has stated that Selzer's poll misled and influenced voters, as well as negatively impacted the Republican campaign in Iowa by forcing them to needlessly divert more time and resources here.

Trump claims to be filing the lawsuit to set precedent. He says he wants to hold Selzer accountable for election interference. Many question this intention.

Opponents think that rather than setting precedent against election interference, Trump is hoping to establish that journalism that paints him in a negative light will not be tolerated. Regardless, his true motives remain to be seen as the lawsuit develops.

New Contenders

A recent development in the Selzer lawsuit serves to draw Iowa further into the political sphere. In February, Iowa Representative Marionette Miller-Meeks and former Iowa Senator Brad Zaun joined Trump's lawsuit against Selzer. Amidst the cacophony of the presidential election, state elections were also taking place.

Miller-Meeks narrowly won her re-election, while Zaun lost his. Both of them cited the Selzer poll as the cause of their struggles. They both claim the poll influenced voters in their districts, which changed the outcomes of their elections, yet neither Miller-Meeks nor Zaun was ever specifically mentioned in Selzer's poll.

Selzer's poll did publish results about ideological preferences in congressional districts, yet it never mentioned a Republican or Democratic candidate.

Representative Miller-Meeks did not respond to a request to comment when asked to speak about the lawsuit.

> "Mr. Trump's claims are barred by the First Amendment and have no merit. Consumer fraud statutes are about protecting buyers from the scam artist who rolls back the odometer on a used car, not settling political grudges."
>
> **CONOR FITZPATRICK,** ATTORNEY TO J. ANN SELZER

Rules of the Game

Trump filed his lawsuit against Selzer under the Iowa Consumer Fraud Act. This statute prohibits "deception, fraud, false pretense, false promise or misrepresentation" of merchandise. This left many confused or skeptical about the actual legal validity of the lawsuit. The Iowa Consumer Fraud statute is supposed to protect consumers from buying fraudulent or misleading products.

"Mr. Trump's claims are barred by the First Amendment and have no merit. Consumer fraud statutes are about protecting buyers from the scam artist who rolls back the odometer on a used car, not settling political grudges," said Conor Fitzpatrick, one of Selzer's attorneys. "These sort of lawsuits, filed to harass rather than pursue legitimate claims, have no place under our Constitution or in our courthouses."

Fitzpatrick is a member of the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expressions, a nonprofit organization dedicated to defending free speech



and thought. He believes that news cannot fall under the category of merchandise, making the lawsuit negligible.

The lawsuit also cites election interference as one of Selzer's transgressions. However, under Iowa law, an election poll does not qualify as election interference. Election interference requires deliberate deceit with the intention of changing election results, not merely allowing people to consume factual predictions and form their own opinions. Whether this will be the interpretation of the law remains to be seen.

The Implications

University of Iowa Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Brett Johnson, stated that these types of lawsuits can be used to "get around the teeth of defamation claims."

Defamation lawsuits are extremely hard to win without an abundance of evidence, so by filing the lawsuit under fringe torts, Trump is able to punish journalists without jumping through all the hoops of defamation claims, according to Johnson.

It's also believed that this case is a SLAPP lawsuit. SLAPP, which stands for Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation, is an intimidation tactic historically used to cause setbacks for the supposed offending party.

> "The threat of litigation like this can create a chilling effect among media outlets, and especially independent journalists, who want to express dissent."
>
> **MICHAEL EPSTEIN**, PROFESSOR OF LAW AT SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL

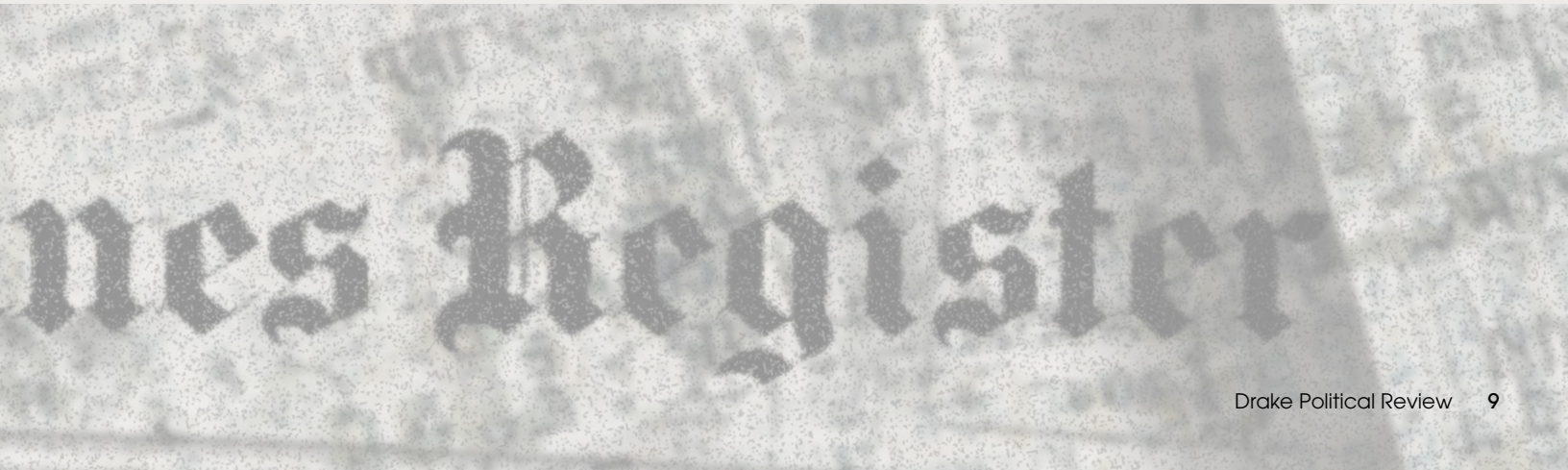
"If [the lawsuit] exacts enough pain against the Register or other smaller time newspapers who, let's be honest, are not flush with cash, they are going to think twice before publishing anything that could get them embroiled in even a frivolous lawsuit like this," Johnson said.

Michael Epstein, Professor of Law at the Southwestern Law School, shared a similar sentiment.

"The threat of litigation like this can create a chilling effect among media outlets, and especially independent journalists, who want to express dissent," he said.

These worrisome predictions from experts in the field have many people concerned about the future of journalism and media.

With these types of lawsuits becoming more prevalent, such as the suits against ABC and CBS, journalists everywhere will have to defend their right to inform the public and have their voices heard.



BIRD FLU IN IOWA

WORDS SADIE JONES
DESIGN TYLER STRACHAN

Highly pathogenic avian influenza is the first link in a chain of events impacting Iowa animals, businesses and people.

Shelly Wassenaar, the owner of The Hatchery, a restaurant in Orange City, Iowa is used to ingredients fluctuating in price.

"It's almost to the point of being comical, of how [suppliers] follow what's going to be utilized the most at this time of year or this season, and then all of a sudden you'll start to see a spike in that," Wassenaar said.

But the cost of eggs has become unprecedentedly expensive. A dozen large Grade A eggs cost $1.79 at the end of 2021, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Three years later, the same dozen eggs cost nearly $6.

Expenses like these have made it hard for Wassenaar to own a restaurant, she said.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Clade 2.3.4.4b is the first link in a chain of events impacting Iowa businesses, people and animals.

The Path to Iowa

A flock of domestic geese in Guangdong, China was affected by a new strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), later designated as A/goose/Guandong/1/1996 (H5N1), in the spring of 1996, according to Dr. Andrew Ramey's article in the Journal of Wildlife Management Volume 86, Issue 2. 40% of the flock died.

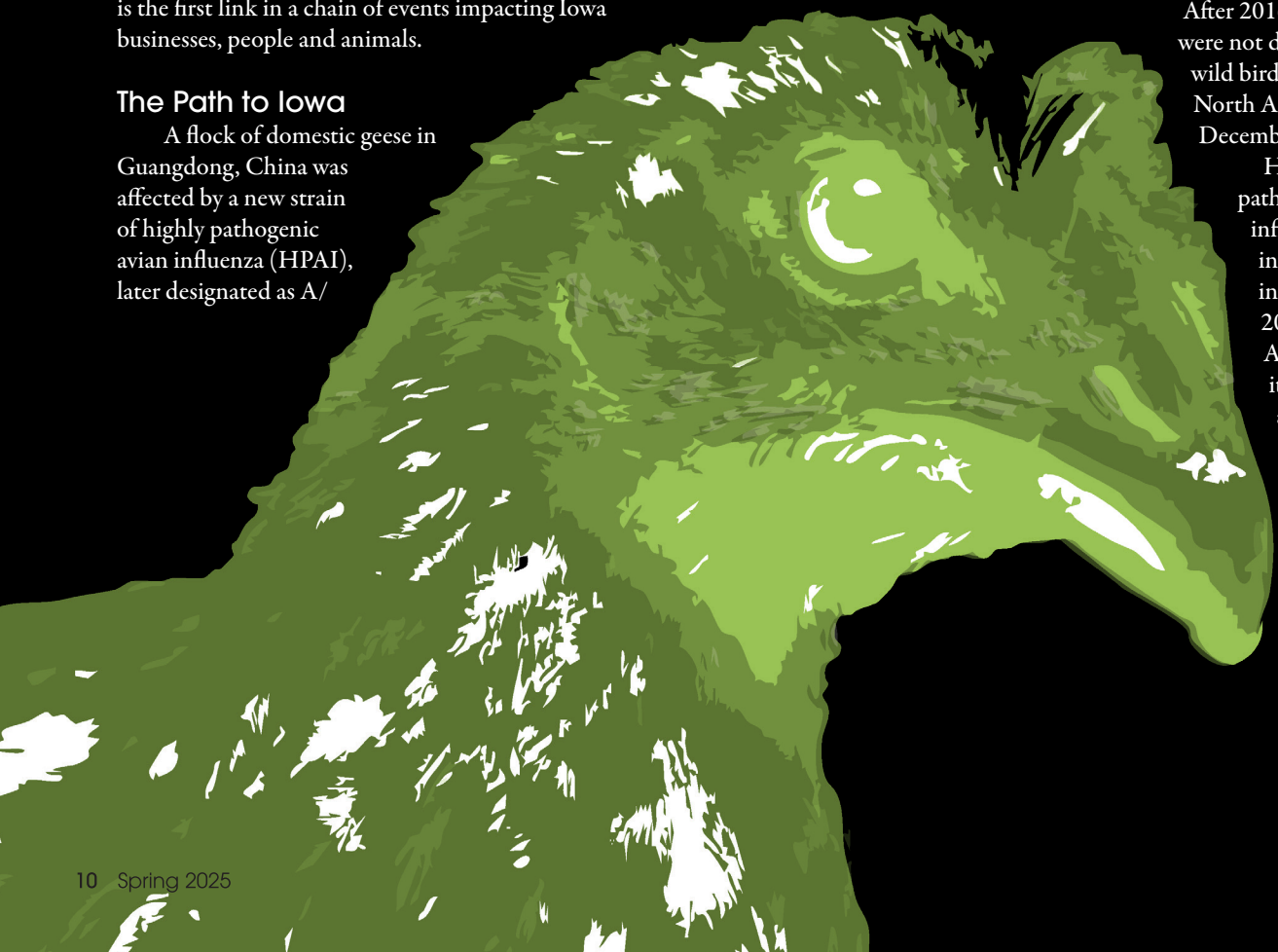
The strain continued to impact domestic flocks and poultry workers in China until wild birds caught it in 2002 in Hong Kong. It was the first time in 40 years that wild birds contracted HPAI.

From there, the H5N1 strain spread around Asia, into Europe and then the United States.

More than 32 million commercial birds in Iowa were affected by the outbreak of 2014 and 2015, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This is part of the nationwide total of 7 million turkeys and 43 million domestic chickens that died from the disease or were depopulated to stop the spread.

After 2016, HPAI viruses were not detected in wild birds inhabiting North America — until December 2021.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza was detected in an exhibition flock in Canada. In early 2022, the first American bird had it. This gave birth to a new subtype of the virus: Influenza A(H5N1) clade 2.3.4.4b. It's one of the strains the United States is combating today.



The State of the Virus

Since January 2022, nearly 400 wild birds in Iowa and more than 12,000 wild birds nationally have been affected by HPAI, according to the USDA.

More detections of HPAI have been reported in commercial and backyard domestic flocks, according to the USDA. As of March 17, over 30 million domestic birds in Iowa have been affected by HPAI since February 2022. That's almost one-fifth of the 168 million birds that were impacted nationwide.

Avian influenza's impact goes beyond birds. It affects farmers, business owners and consumers.

Impact on Farmers

"No one raises turkeys to put them down [in] the barn," said Sheila Larson, the vice president of communications and membership at the Iowa Turkey Federation.

Larson said the H5N1 outbreak has been a trying time for farmers. She would know. She's been helping her husband run Larson Turkey Farms since 2005, and in 2022, one of their barns had a positive test.

"Right away, when you hear that you have a positive, you're in shock, and then it just starts moving so rapidly," Larson said.

About ten national and local officials arrived at her farm. Larson and her husband had to depopulate the barn where there was a positive test, plus two other barns.

In addition to the emotional strain of having to put her turkeys down, she worried about her financial livelihood.

"You don't know how long it's going to be until you're back up and running," Larson said. "Your plans to sell and to restock have now just kind of gone up in the air and you don't know what's going to happen next."

And what happens to the farmer happens to stakeholders.

"It's just a big chain of events, for sure," Larson said. "I mean, it's a whole system that affects everyone...the grocery stores, the restaurants — all the businesses providing anything."

> "I can see my numbers dropping in people because they need to make the decision of do I go out to eat, or do I pay my insurance, or do I pay my rent?"
>
> **SHELLY WASSENAAR,**
> OWNER OF THE HATCHERY

> "I think that it has the potential to be a real, legitimate and concerning human health issue. We're not there yet, and we don't want to get there."
>
> **RACHEL RUDEN,**
> IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Impact on Businesses

"It's just gotten too much," said Wassenaar. "Everything. Everything."

Wassenaar has owned The Hatchery since February 2011. The first thing she noticed was the rising cost of eggs. At one point, she could buy 60 dozen eggs for $28; now, she pays $400 for the same amount, she said.

But Wassenaar has other expenses. She said the cost of her other groceries are increasing, she needs to repair her building and she needs to pay her employees.

"Everything has taken a jump," Wassenaar said. "And there's only so much room that you can keep raising prices without people going, 'Oh, okay, we're not gonna come and eat.'"

Wassenaar said Sioux County is wealthy, but its residents don't want to spend extra on dining.

"I can see my numbers dropping in people because they need to make the decision of do I go out to eat, or do I pay my insurance, or do I pay my rent?" Wassenaar said.

Concerns for Future

Rachel Ruden, the state wildlife veterinarian at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, is concerned about HPAI becoming a human health issue.

"In some regards, it's like how COVID was perceived of this: if it has more opportunities to move through more people, it can mutate, it can maybe adapt to new species — all these things," Ruden said. "A lot of that comes into play with highly pathogenic avian influenza. The more people that are exposed, maybe the more opportunity there is for that virus to adapt to mammals, adapt to people, become communicable across people, and not just require that input from a wild animal or poultry."

For now, HPAI presents a low risk to the public, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

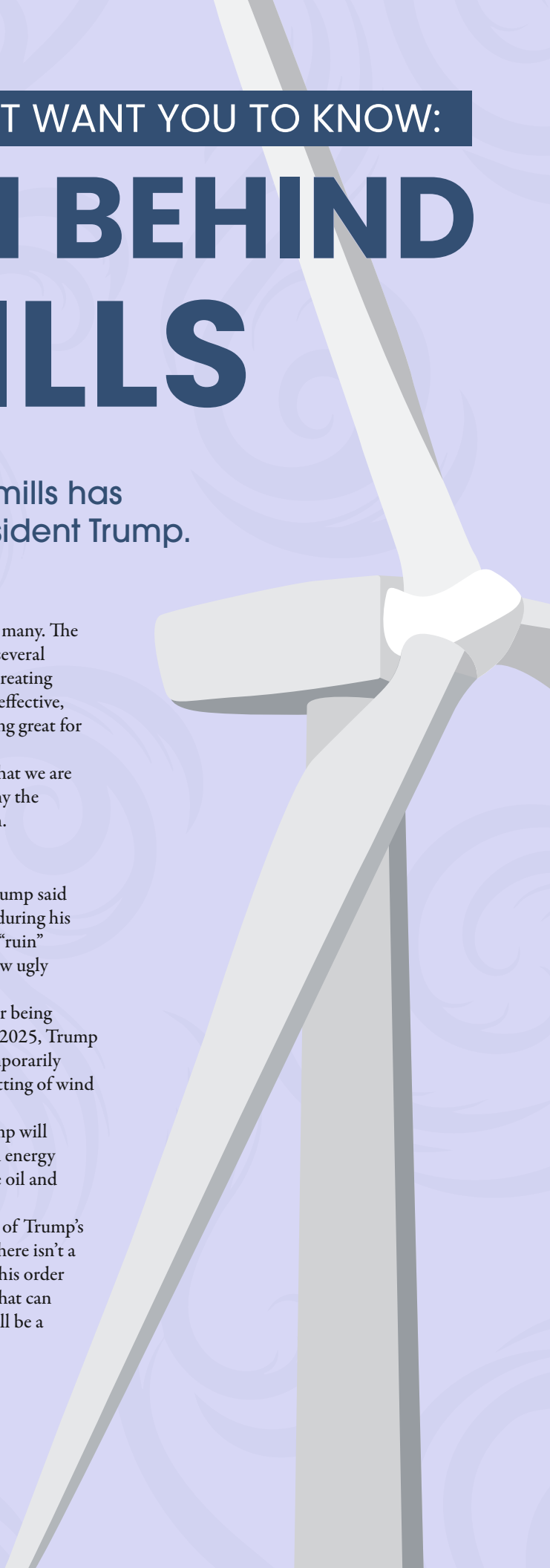
"I think that it has the potential to be a real, legitimate and concerning human health issue," Ruden said. "We're not there yet, and we don't want to get there."

WHAT THE DEEP STATE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW:

THE TRUTH BEHIND WINDMILLS

WORDS JACK HARRINGTON **DESIGN** EVE LOEHRER

The apparently partisan issue of windmills has become a minor talking point for President Trump.



In the current era of information overload, it isn't rare to hear something that may seem crazy, completely forget about it and get no more information about it afterward. That is most likely the case with the current drama surrounding windmills.

Yes, you read that right, windmills. President Donald Trump has a long-running feud with wind energy, mostly surrounding windmills. He is not the only person who dislikes wind turbines, but he certainly is their loudest and most noteworthy critic.

In 2023, Trump famously suggested that windmills are killing whales by "driving them crazy." There is no evidence to prove that windmills are killing whales or that they are "driving them crazy."

This was one of his loudest tirades against windmills and caught quite a bit of media attention due to its outlandish and blatantly false nature.

Issues and Benefits

The most prominent issue for most people seems to be that they can be loud and aren't the most aesthetically pleasing in some people's opinions.

According to the Department of Energy, one of the other possible challenges is that wind energy can "impact local wildlife." However, it is still less harmful to local wildlife than other energy developments, and if you listen to the President of the United States, they kill whales.

As for benefits, there are many. The Department of Energy gives several examples, such as windmills creating good-paying jobs, being cost-effective, creating clean energy and being great for the economy.

But the benefits aren't what we are here for, so let's go back to why the president hates them so much.

Actions Made

During his campaign, Trump said we wouldn't do wind energy during his administration. He said they "ruin" neighborhoods because of how ugly they are.

Almost immediately after being inaugurated again in January 2025, Trump signed an executive order temporarily halting the leasing and permitting of wind energy projects.

This order made by Trump will undoubtedly hinder the wind energy industry and bring back more oil and gas drilling.

As is the case with much of Trump's first 100 days back in office, there isn't a ton of detail on exactly how this order will affect the industry and what can be done, but certainly, this will be a hit to renewable energy and windmills.

SOMETHING'S FISHY IN THE IOWA HOUSE



Darter makes waves in 50-year-old state fish debate.

WORDS LILY WASSERMAN
DESIGN TYLER STRACHAN

A two-inch fish has revived a 50-year-old debate in the Iowa House of Representatives, one that doesn't seem to be stopping.

Last legislative session, a constituent of Rep. John Wills (R-Dickinson) recommended that Wills establish the Iowa darter as Iowa's state fish. Iowa is one of two states without a state fish — the other being Ohio — and currently, the insect-eating darters are the only fish named after the Hawkeye State.

"It's a little guy, but it's only found in the highest quality water. You've got it all over the state, but you've probably never seen it because it's good at hiding, even though it's brightly colored," Wills said. "And so I saw that I thought, 'Well, this is a fun idea.' We deal with all kinds of serious issues. Maybe it's time for us to just kind of have a fun one and just see what happens."

What happened was a divided committee. Other members suggested catfish, bullheads, bluegills and other Iowa swimmers. The bill didn't make it through.

However, the darter is not the first fish to flop in the Iowa House of Representatives.

The Channel Catfish: Iowa's First Splash

Outdoorsman George Marzeck from Burlington implored his representatives to nominate the channel catfish from 1968 up until his death in 2006.

"It is an easily recognized and abundant native of the state," Marzeck said to The Des Moines Register in 1972. "It is very popular among a great majority of Iowa anglers; and it is becoming more significant commercially, not only in Iowa but throughout the nation."

At the time of the bill's conception, only 16 states had a state fish, but Marzeck saw other states beginning to hatch and spawn their state iconography. His channel catfish, a river-residing beast that can grow to be over 3 ft. long, swam upstream against every other fish in the Iowa waters. Ultimately, though, Iowa legislators would not reel in the fish.

"I feel like I'm hitting my head against a brick wall," Marzeck told The Des Moines Register in 1978. His fight would continue for 28 more years to no avail.



> "It's almost a clean water barometer for us. As we see the population of the darter go up, that's a very good indication to us that water quality is getting better."
>
> **JIM OBRADOVICH,**
> LOBBYIST FOR THE IOWA CONSERVATION ALLIANCE



After a few more channel catfish proposals, no more bubbles rose to the surface regarding the state fish. That is until the Iowa darter entered the pool.

Why Do People Want a State Fish?

State symbols, whether they be mammal, reptile or a John Denver song, act as unifiers for a state, but also as symbols of distinction — showing what makes each state unique. This can be geography, flora, fauna, historic moments that the state is proud of and more. The wild rose, Iowa's state flower, is a reminder of the flowers presented to the battleship USS Iowa, and the geode, the state rock, recalls Iowa's plethora of the rock.

The Iowa darter, or Etheostoma exile, has a blunt snout, olive-colored scales with patterns of dark red or orange blotches, and is, on average, two inches long — around the size of a catfish's whisker. Despite the name, it lives both within and outside the state borders, in calmer lakes, streams and ponds.

Wills hoped that the Iowa darter would serve to refute the common phrase that all of Iowa has poor water quality.

"It's important that you can point to the Iowa darter and say, 'We've got this fish that's found in high-quality water and we've got high-quality water,'" Wills said.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources classified more than 700 water segments as impaired in its 2024 water quality assessment report, though this list is limited to waters the DNR is monitoring. In January, the EPA suggested seven additions to that list based on nitrate amounts.

According to the DNR's codex, a segment being impaired can be due to high levels of pollutants, concerns about the amount of variety of fish or high levels of bacteria.

The Iowa Conservation Alliance, a lobbying group made up of outdoor organizations, has declared themselves for the proposal. Lobbyist Jim Obradovich said that as Iowa has emphasized water quality in recent years with projects such as the water quality initiative, the Iowa darter serves the state's goals.

"It's almost a clean water barometer for us. As we see the population of the darter go up, that's a very good indication to us that water quality is getting better," Obradovich said. "And it's a good indication that the programs and the projects that the state is funding are actually having an effect on water quality."

The Iowa Chapter of American Fisheries has also joined the chorus of voices arguing in favor of the darter. They have a page on their website encouraging Iowa residents to teach people about the Iowa darter's journey to state fish and contact their local representatives.

The presentation they compiled includes information about the Iowa darter. It also directly addresses other candidates in the race.

"There's a lot of repetition in state fish selections, so many states sharing their state fish with other states," the presentation said. "There's obviously nothing unique, for example, about a channel catfish."

This year, the bill did not make it through, though the upstream battle may begin anew next year. It remains to be seen how many times a fish will have to swim through the House to become Iowa's state fish.

A DEI DISCONNECT



Americans define DEI's role in business differently.

WORDS SADIE JONES **DESIGN** EMILY ZELLER

When readers crack open chapter five of "Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators" by Ron Culp and Matthew Ragas, they find a narrative in conflict with today's reality.

"A separate Just Capitol [2020] poll indicated that the majority of the American public believed that companies should implement workplace policies that dismantle racism and advance equity," the book says.

Just five years later, it seems the public wants to dismantle those policies. Walmart, Target, Amazon, Google and Meta are all on the list of companies ending their diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

Those who champion DEI initiatives in businesses still stand. Faith and civil rights leaders launched a 40-day boycott against Target on March 5.

Americans disagree on DEI's role in businesses — the first reason for that being that they define DEI differently.

"Boy, Oh Boy" Lots of Changes

Author Matt Ragas is a professor of professional communication at DePaul University with a background in business administration, management and marketing.

According to Ragas, business leaders think it's riskier today than four years ago to commit to DEI.

"When this book came out [in March 2021], it was obviously in the wake of George Floyd being murdered, [Black Lives Matter] protests and a lot of demands by consumers and investors to have companies embrace what might be called stakeholder capitalism," Ragas said.

In other words, employees and consumers wanted companies to focus more on their well-being — not just that of people who owned stock. Employees and consumers had a lot of power, Ragas said.

"Consumers were literally those same people buying your products [and] also marching on the streets," Ragas said. "There was this groundswell where [business leaders] took the temperature and the pulse and said, 'We should lean in on this and we should embrace this.'"

After that, companies started committing to DEI. Target pledged to invest in Black-owned businesses. Walmart required its executive leaders to follow a curriculum on the history of race and racial inequity.

Other companies, like John Deere and Bud Light, promoted media with diverse representation.

"We had a lot of commitments and announcements made in 2020, 2021 — even into 2022," Ragas said. "And I think as you do correctly know — boy, oh boy, have we had lots of changes."

Changes in the sociopolitical landscape of the United States are causing business leaders to see a higher risk in committing to DEI, Ragas said.

First, a new legal precedent. The Supreme Court declared the race-conscious admission policies of Harvard College unconstitutional on June 29, 2023.

"That was then used as an early rationale and look-through to the present of companies also then saying, 'This could impact us and how we run certain programs internally,'" Ragas said.

Next, the 2024 presidential election, voters elected President Donald Trump, who, on Jan. 21, signed an executive order calling on executive agencies to "combat illegal private-sector DEI preferences, mandates, policies, programs, and activities."

Now, public opinion on DEI is divided to a higher extreme.

> " Being a Black woman comes with a lot. The way that I'm treated is going to be completely different to the way a white woman or somebody else is going to be treated. And so I don't want someone to rush that part of my identity. If you take away that difference, it's taking away part of my experience. "
>
> **MARY NGUNU,** DEI MANAGER AT ACCRA HOME CARE

A YouGov survey from January 2025 reported that 25% of U.S. adults have become more supportive, 21% have become less supportive and 38% have maintained the same level of support for DEI programs over the last decade.

The difference in Americans' support for DEI in business can be explained by their different definitions of DEI.

DEI Is Everywhere

Mary Ngunu, the DEI manager at Accra Home Care, an agency in Minnesota, defines DEI as the way businesses respond to their employees' unique needs.

"People are coming from different walks of life, different access, different privilege, so [we were] recognizing that everyone had those different and unique needs and had them acknowledged," said Ngunu about her DEI committee in its early days.

According to Ngunu, DEI is everywhere and impacts everybody.

"Say someone is a veteran, [has] veteran status, that is a DEI component," Ngunu said. "When people see family restrooms, that's a DEI component. Having pay equity and transparency — a lot of companies have started listing their pay ranges and making that transparent — that's a DEI accommodation, that's a DEI function. Being able for women to have children, have their job in place and come back. Maternity, paternity leave, having food options, wellness programs."

This is not how all Americans define DEI.

DEI Is a Focus on Identity Politics

Andy Hooser, the host of the talk radio show "The Voice of Reason," defines DEI as a way of focusing on identity politics. With a professional background in political science, government and campaigning, Hooser likes to use constitutional principles and logic while discussing current events.

"This DEI, I think at the basic level, was intended to do something good, to try and bring people together and try and bring a level playing field," Hooser said. "The problem, like I said, with it is it brings more attention and focus onto identity politics in general and it does more harm than good."

Hooser said identity politics is the cause of the ongoing division in the United States.

"The biggest push in the socialist realm and the big government realm, it's divide and conquer," Hooser said. "The way they divide is by showing the differences from individuals."

According to Hooser, identity politics puts people in boxes, by skin color, gender and other identifiers.

"DEI has only exacerbated that [division] to the 'nth degree, to where you're not an individual anymore, you're a person with a certain skin color, a certain sexual orientation, a certain gender identity," Hooser said. "And it's exacerbated that so much that it's led to the societal tensions that we have today."

DEI efforts have turned Hooser away from certain companies.

He used to gather with his friends to watch the NFL and drink Bud Light. It was a way to "get away from politics," he said.

"I haven't watched a football game in probably five, six years after the whole Colin Kaepernick kneeling with the national anthem," Hooser said. "Now, politics has infiltrated into other markets that they weren't supposed to be in in the first place."

On Aug. 26, 2016, Kaepernick, then the quarterback of the 49ers, knelt during the national anthem before a game. Following the incident, Kaepernick said he wouldn't "show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color," according to the New York Times.

On April 1, 2023, Bud Light sponsored an Instagram post by Dylan Mulvaney, an influencer who is transgender. That quarter, Bud Light's revenue declined by 10.5%, primarily due to a decrease in sales, according to its results report from the second quarter of 2023.

Hooser said businesses have the right to make any commitments they want to. However, he thinks it's a bad decision for businesses to commit to DEI.

"They're openly politicizing their own business that's going to divide their support for customers one way or the other," Hooser said.

Defining the Future

"I think that we're going to naturally organically grow out of this device and this would be a better society," Hooser said.

But first, he thinks Americans should stop focusing on what makes them different and unite based on their status as human beings.

"The private sector does allow us to be able to actually move forward in this right direction and bring everybody together based on you being a consumer and a member of society as opposed to these individual identity blocks," Hooser said.

A person's character and soul are all that matters, Hooser said.

"We're so focused and desperate to have some type of special identity based on how we look in the superficial skin that we have, that it just doesn't matter," he said. "Are you a good human? Do you have a good character? Do you have a good soul? That's all that matters."

But Ngunu said she wants to be seen as a Black woman, not just a human.

"Being a Black woman comes with a lot," Ngunu said. "The way that I'm treated is going to be completely different to the way a white woman or somebody else is going to be treated. And so I don't want someone to rush that part of my identity. If you take away that difference, it's taking away part of my experience."

Because of how they celebrate and aid differences, DEI programs allow Ngunu to feel seen as a Black woman and others to feel seen in their identity.

Ngunu will continue executing DEI programs at Accra Home Care, leading with this philosophy: "Compassion proceeds comprehension."

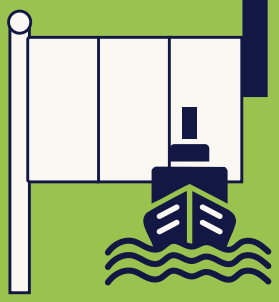
Meaning Ngunu may not understand another's perspective, but she can show them compassion regardless.

> " This DEI, I think at the basic level, was intended to do something good, to try and bring people together and try and bring a level playing field. The problem, like I said, with it is it brings more attention and focus onto identity politics in general and it does more harm than good. "
>
> **ANDY HOOSER,** HOST OF "THE VOICE OF REASON"

TARIFFS 101

What are they, how are they used and why is President Trump talking about them?

WORDS GUNNER ONKST **DESIGN** EMILY ZELLER



As many anxious Americans watched the 2024 election play out, confused about how a tax equals a lower price value on eggs, the majority still submitted their ballots for Donald Trump. Suddenly, tariffs are becoming a relevant term that people are learning for the first time.

Essentially, a tariff is a tax on other countries' goods or services. By implementing these taxes, the goal is to make these imported goods less competitive amongst locally produced products for consumers.

"When we have a tax, the price of this thing that's being taxed goes up, we consume less of them. That's the fundamental way in which taxes work, they become more expensive, we consume less of them," said Dr. Joshua Rosenbloom, the department chair of economics at Iowa State University.

Tariffs have been a fundamental method in shaping the economics of America from its early beginnings. In 1789, the United States implemented its first tariff when the Tariff Act of 1789 was made into law. Its purpose was to help raise revenue for the government. This has long been a common practice for the government, which relied on tariffs as a key source of revenue during the Civil War.

Although tariffs have been used to support the U.S. government, they aren't perfect. They protect local industries in the short term, but they create higher consumer prices and risk retaliatory measures.

On Feb. 2, President Trump signed an executive order to place tariffs on Mexico and Canada. This would create a 25% tariff on all goods imported from the two countries as well as 10% tariff on Canadian oil. By signing this, these tariffs infringed upon the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

In 2020, the USMCA replaced the North American Free Trade Agreement to help modernize food and agriculture trade.

Imposing tariffs would have strained trade relations between the three countries. However, this was prevented by the White House suspending tariffs after last minute deals with Canada and Mexico on securing their borders.

Although these tariffs seem like they will help America, that is far from the truth. With the expense of added tariffs, the prices at checkout will only rise as the costs will increase due to manufacturers' reliance on imported goods.

Furthermore, imposing on the USMCA will increase costs amongst industries, disrupt supply chains and threaten the USMCA itself.

With Trump continually threatening to write even more tariffs, it is unsure what their future will be.

"The uncertainty that this creates for everybody has a damaging effect because businesses have to make decisions in advance. They have to order goods that are going to be produced and delivered in the future, and they don't know what the cost of those goods is going to be if they don't know what's going to happen to tariffs," Rosenbloom said.

By threatening the trade agreements in North America, the Trump Administration is presenting other countries, like Russia and China, an opportunity to advance to foreign markets while the U.S. is scrounging. Tariffs may offer short wins, but it is important to ensure that relations between other countries are still intact.



THE EXECUTIVE *FAST LANE*

WORDS BRECKYN LYONS **DESIGN** EVE LOEHRER

Signed in seconds, but lasting change may not be so easy.



Over the past few months, President Donald Trump has ridden waves of encouragement and suffered those of criticism as he's dismantled federal agencies, disrupted long-standing alliances and rewritten national priorities.

All of these initiatives and more have been the result of Trump's prolific and publicized use of executive orders. However, with media buzz and fierce polarization, it's often difficult to understand what executive orders and their use means for the nation.

Executive orders are written directives from the president that guide federal agency management, enforce existing laws and shape policy.

The authority to provide these directives is rooted in the "Take Care" clause in Article II of the U.S. Constitution, which states, "[The Executive] shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed..." While each executive order holds the binding power of law, the directives themselves are not laws.

Beyond their governing power over governmental agencies, the influence of executive orders is limited to their ability to capture public attention and create conversation about policy matters — tapping into what constitutional scholar Dr. Greg Elinson has described as the "attention economy."

This vested authority, though, does not come without limitations. As it stands, executive orders can be limited in three ways: through congressional action that reverses the directive, through a court finding of unconstitutionality or contradiction to federal law, or through the rescission or amendment of an earlier executive order by a sitting president.

However, each of these options for recourse brings its challenges. A divided Congress limits the possibility of congressional action, litigation is costly and time-consuming, and the flip-flopping of executive policies at the discretion of the sitting president creates uncertainty for the agencies they oversee. Additionally, the employment of these checks and balances requires those in the legislative and judicial branches to take action against the president.

"The potential problem is that the other branches have to be willing to actually exert their powers to constrain the power of the executive," said Dr. Megan Goldberg, an assistant professor of American politics at Cornell College.

Now in his second term, Trump has already written more executive orders in his first few weeks than he did in the first year of his first term and is on track to outpace all previous presidents.

It's clear that his use of this tool — to do everything from banning paper straws to declaring an official national language — will continue to shape the administration's ability to make good on campaign promises and drive forward its agenda.

To better understand how Trump has been utilizing executive orders, it's important to examine some of his recent directives.

E.O. 14158: Establishing and Implementing the President's "Department of Governmental Efficiency"

While only Congress can establish cabinet-level departments, Trump was able to flex his executive power by creating the now well-known DOGE, which is meant to follow through on campaign promises to cut government spending. Its initial



purpose, as established by this introductory executive order, was to modernize federal agency technology to promote governmental efficiency and productivity for an 18-month period. However, the power of this executive agency has since been expanded through various other executive orders granting authority in deregulatory action (E.O. 12219) and cost efficiency (E.O. 14222).

E.O. 14242: Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States and Communities

While executive orders can expand governmental bureaucracy, they can also significantly limit jurisdiction and capabilities. The signing of this executive order directed the Secretary of Education, Linda McMahon, to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education, which has long been an agenda item for some in the Republican Party. Though the actual dissolution of the department would require an act of Congress, this executive action functionally renders it powerless.

E.O. 14231: Progress on the Situation at Our Northern Border

The U.S. Constitution grants Congress power over import tariffs. However, certain exceptions provide the executive the ability to enact tariffs. This is one of several executive orders that have established tariffs on particular goods coming into the United States; others have been placed on Mexico and China. The action enacts a 10% tariff on energy and a 25% tariff on all goods imported from Canada. While this particular order has since been amended, it's an excellent example of how executive orders can play a role in the United States' international economic relations.

E.O. 14148: Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions

As previously mentioned, a president has the authority to amend or rescind previous executive orders. Early in his second term, President Trump revoked 78 of former President Joe Biden's executive orders to realign executive agency policies with his agenda, highlighting one of the few ways that executive action can be overridden. This included executive orders related to COVID-19-era protocols, orders of succession within Cabinet-level departments, and civil rights protections.

E.O. 14172: Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness

This order is meant to promote national heritage by renaming natural wonders and historic art pieces to honor "visionary and patriotic Americans." This has included changing Denali in Alaska to Mount McKinley and the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America. While it does not compel citizens, corporations or governments around the world to recognize the change, it has influenced some non-governmental entities to adjust their maps, including Apple and Google. Some that have not adopted the new names of these geographical sites have been the subject of retaliatory actions, such as the limiting of The Associated Press' access to presidential events.

**Editor's note: Since writing this article, the Associated Press has been regranted full access to the president by a federal judge.*



SAVING



While both Trump and Biden have tried to 'save' the nation, their political divides indicate divergent ideas of what threatens our country.

WORDS OLIVIA KUFFEL **DESIGN** TYLER STRACHAN

When Joe Biden took the Oval Office in 2021 and Donald Trump retook it in 2025, both had a simple, essential message: 'I'm here to save the nation.'

Biden's campaign focused on, in his own words, "the defense, protection and preservation of American democracy," while Trump's message has always been to "Make America Great Again" in the face of challenges to the nation.

Both believe that the nation is facing internal and external threats and needs revitalization. But clearly, these two men have vastly different visions for the United States.

Different Worldviews

Jim McCormick, professor emeritus of political science at Iowa State University, points out that the presidents' starkly different worldviews shape the threats they perceive.

Biden pointed to the rise of authoritarianism worldwide and the diminishment of American leadership abroad as a problem.

"Biden's a liberal internationalist," McCormick said. "He saw saving the nation as reestablishing [the U.S.'] position in the world order. Trump was exactly the opposite. He's a realist in design. He saw the way to save the nation was to do something about the economy and borders and to deal with other nations in a much more transactional way."

Trump's foreign affairs approach centers on making the nation safer, stronger and more prosperous. In a press statement on Jan. 22, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that "to advance our national interest," priorities would be replaced, issues deemphasized and practices eliminated.

How to Save the Nation

Donna Hoffman, Ph.d., professor of political science at the University of Northern Iowa, believes that the 'saving the nation' rhetoric is problematic.

"The president can't just save the nation," Hoffman said. "And we don't want them to engage with that kind of rhetoric. It comes down to American ignorance, that we want the president to do all this stuff, when there's very little in the Constitution where the president can just do stuff. Americans wanting the president to save us is very problematic."

Both presidents have used executive orders in the same way: to overturn the others' previous actions. In January 2021, Biden established diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, took climate action and created immigration programs. In January 2025, Trump removed DEI initiatives, reversed climate action and cracked down

NATION



on immigration. Outside of executive orders, Biden rejoined the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement when he took office. In January, Trump left both for the second time.

This constant reversal demonstrates that both view the other as damaging to the nation and view themselves as a solution. However, Trump's latest round of executive orders can't survive on their own.

"If Trump wants permanency in these changes, he has to get congressional legislation. Otherwise, of course, executive orders can be overturned by the next administration," McCormick said.

McCormick also explained that Trump would want to move legislation through Congress soon because Democrats will be fighting to retake the House of Representatives in the 2026 midterm elections.

"It's going to be very difficult to get his agenda if he loses the House," McCormick said.

However, Trump has used executive orders rather than making efforts to set a Congressional agenda. Hoffman believes that's because presidents often lack the authority to make good on campaign promises, so they use tools like executive orders to create the appearance of achievement.

"He's symbolically saying 'I promised that I'd do this, but I can't actually do that, so I'm going to do this thing with no statutory authority.' And then people look at it, and he says, 'Look, I've done this,' and everyone says 'yay,'" Hoffman said.

Appeal to Existential Threat

Hoffman also believes that professing to save the nation created a new political development: the idea of an existential threat.

"I think raising an existential threat — and both did — is new. I think it stems from the othering and negative partisanship that we have done. When you 'other' your political opposition, it's easier to make it into an existential threat," she said. "However, we did see in 2021 a non-peaceful transfer of power. I think there was legitimately an existential threat related to what democracy looks like in the U.S."

But McCormick views rhetoric about existential threats as part of the political process.

"That's what drives policy," he said. "The perception of threat is what guides policy and action; policy doesn't come in a vacuum. It's got to be responsive to some perceived issue or threat."

> " He's symbolically saying 'I promised that I'd do this, but I can't actually do that, so I'm going to do this thing with no statutory authority.' And then people look at it, and he says, 'Look, I've done this,' and everyone says 'yay.' "
>
> **DR. DONNA HOFFMAN,**
> POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR AT UNIVESITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

TRUMP'S TRUSTED WOMEN

WORDS JOSIE THOMPSON
DESIGN TYLER STRACHAN



The high-profile women featured in Donald Trump's cabinet raise many questions.

The increase in women chosen compared to Donald Trump's first term sparked the debate as to qualifications versus loyalty and what side of the aisle women's voices are turning.

Janet Peterson, an Iowa state senator representing the areas near the Drake neighborhood, had some concerns about the new influence of Trump's agenda.

"I don't think it's the same Republican Party that most people remember, the Republican Party is going through a massive realignment. It's the party of Trump right now," Peterson said.

She also commented on setbacks she's seen.

"It's yet to play out on the Trump Administration, but the playbook of Project 2025 includes policies detrimental to women. Right now, I see us in a setback time for women's rights and women economically, and sometimes it takes a wake-up call to spur large change," Peterson said. "I'm hopeful that we see women advance out of this time period that we are in right now."

Here's a look at the women Trump has chosen for his cabinet — their backgrounds, qualifications, experiences, quirks and the perspectives they bring to his administration.

Karoline Leavitt
White House Press Secretary

At 27 years old, Leavitt is now the youngest White House press secretary in history. She gained national attention when she ran for Congress in 2022 and lost, and was also listed as one of Project 2025's instructors. During Trump's first administration, she served as assistant press secretary. Afterwards, she was Representative Elise Stefanik's communications director.

Pam Bondi
Attorney General

After former Rep. Matt Gaetz withdrew his nomination for Attorney General, Bondi was Trump's next choice. Bondi was Florida's first female Attorney General and spent over 18 years as a prosecutor. She focused heavily on fighting the drug crisis and human trafficking. Bondi was a regular defender of Trump's legal woes, and for the past five years, she was a lobbyist representing big companies like Uber and Amazon.

Kristi Noem
Director of Homeland Security

Famously known for her retelling of when she shot her dog in her autobiography, Noem was the first female governor of South Dakota. Beforehand, she served four terms as South Dakota's at-large representative. She succeeded at growing tourism and agriculture in South Dakota and was among the first governors to endorse Trump's run in 2024. She remains committed to her stance on a strong and secure border.

Susie Wiles
White House Chief of Staff

Susie Wiles is the first woman to hold this position and is considered an asset among the Republican party. She worked on Ronald Reagan's campaign back in 1980, helped elect Governors Rick Scott and Ron Desantis, and has a history of managing Trump's campaign.

Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture

This Texas native is the second woman ever to hold this position. Rollins gained lots of support from Republicans and agricultural groups, but progressive groups and scientists are concerned because of her lack of experience in agricultural policy. She served as the CEO of the American First Policy Institute, and during Trump's first term, she was the United States Domestic Policy Council director.

Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Labor Secretary

Chavez recently served her first term in the House for Oregon, was the former mayor of Happy Valley, Oregon, and claims to be an independent thinker. She has a pro-labor record that unions favor, which oddly goes against traditional GOP business interests as well as Trump's past agenda.

Elise Stefanik
Former Nominee for Ambassador to the U.N.

Stefanik was the youngest Republican woman ever elected to Congress. Her history included working on the White House Staff, starting a blog and even managing debate preparation. She was originally a moderate Republican who later become an outspoken advocate for Trump. Trump then endorsed Stefanik to replace Liz Cheney as House Republicans' Conference Chair after Cheney supported his second impeachment.

Linda McMahon
Secretary of Education

The award for the most unpredictable goes to McMahon. She began as a French major, became a secretary and then ended up filing for bankruptcy. She later became co-founder of the WWE with her husband, which included some occasional performances, followed up by two failed runs for the Senate. McMahon was one of Trump's largest donors. After he appointed her the admin of the Small Business Administration during his first term, she later resigned to become the chair of Trump's super PAC.

Tulsi Gabbard
Director of National Intelligence

This political wildcard is now the highest-ranking pacific islander government official in history. She was born in American Samoa and was raised in the Science of Identity Foundation, which some former members describe as a cult. Gabbard then served in Iraq for a few years, served four terms in Congress, ran for president in 2020 in heavy competition with Kamala Harris, and switched over to the Republican party last year with an endorsement for Trump.

The Republican party continues to evolve, and these picks, whether seen as trailblazers or political loyalists, will have a lasting impact on the dynamics in Washington.

"These women that Trump's appointing, they have the record sheet, they're very entitled to those positions," said Michelle Crawford, the president of the Iowa Federation of Republican Women. "He's surrounding himself with people from all different walks of life. He could appoint the most impressive human that everyone agrees is the most impressive human, and [Democrats] would still find a way to bash whoever that person was because they don't ever want to admit that he's doing anything right."

RACY SLOGANS FOR HARD-WON RACES

WORDS AVA CARY **DESIGN** EVE LOEHRER

The long, hard history of presidential crowd-measuring contests.

Politics in the United States has forever been characterized by its strict adherence to solemnity and reason, and that noble undertaking has always been given its due respect in American presidential campaigns.

A candidate's slogan is a glimpse into their values, personality and priorities. Naturally, every candidate treats this with its due importance and never cheapens that message to make a double entendre instead of appealing to the people!

The following traverses history into the psyches of these incredible gentlemen and examines the honor and reverie they afforded to the highest office in the land.

"We Polked You in '44, We Shall Pierce You in '52"

This lovely slogan was used by Franklin Pierce's 1852 campaign and alludes to James K. Polk to draw an appropriate association to between the best president that America ever forgot and the worst president that America also forgot.

The playful message of Pierce's campaign bridged the divide between candidate and populace to form a deeply intimate relationship. That bond was, of course, upheld into his presidency, but only for Confederate enslavers. For everyone else, Pierce spent his presidency alienating abolitionists and imbuing the public memory with his infamy.





"Make Your Wet Dreams Come True"

With a slogan this spirited, it is hard to imagine how Al Smith lost the election! This is a very obvious reference to his plans to end Prohibition. What else could it possibly be about? But really, this slogan was saved by its candidate's defeat. Imagine the chaos and outrage that could have followed on Inauguration Day had Hoover not won the election. Some confused Smith supporters would have found themselves very disappointed indeed, and who can blame them? The only downside of Smith's loss is that, unlike Herbert Hoover, Smith truly was the candidate to make America wetter than ever before.



"All the Way With LBJ"

What a fitting slogan for such a profoundly strange man. The relative tameness of this message is a truly amazing feat on the part of Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign team, considering this president's obsession with his very own Richard Nixon. Everything truly is bigger in Texas. Their messaging masterfully appealed to his supporters' fantasies but always left them wanting more of the well-known sex symbol that was LBJ.



"They Can't Lick Our Dick"

This slogan rises above reproach; no one could possibly find anything objectionable about this message or the candidate! Richard Nixon truly was a president for the people. He was, in fact, so committed to civil servitude that he would violate people's civil liberties to secure his role again.

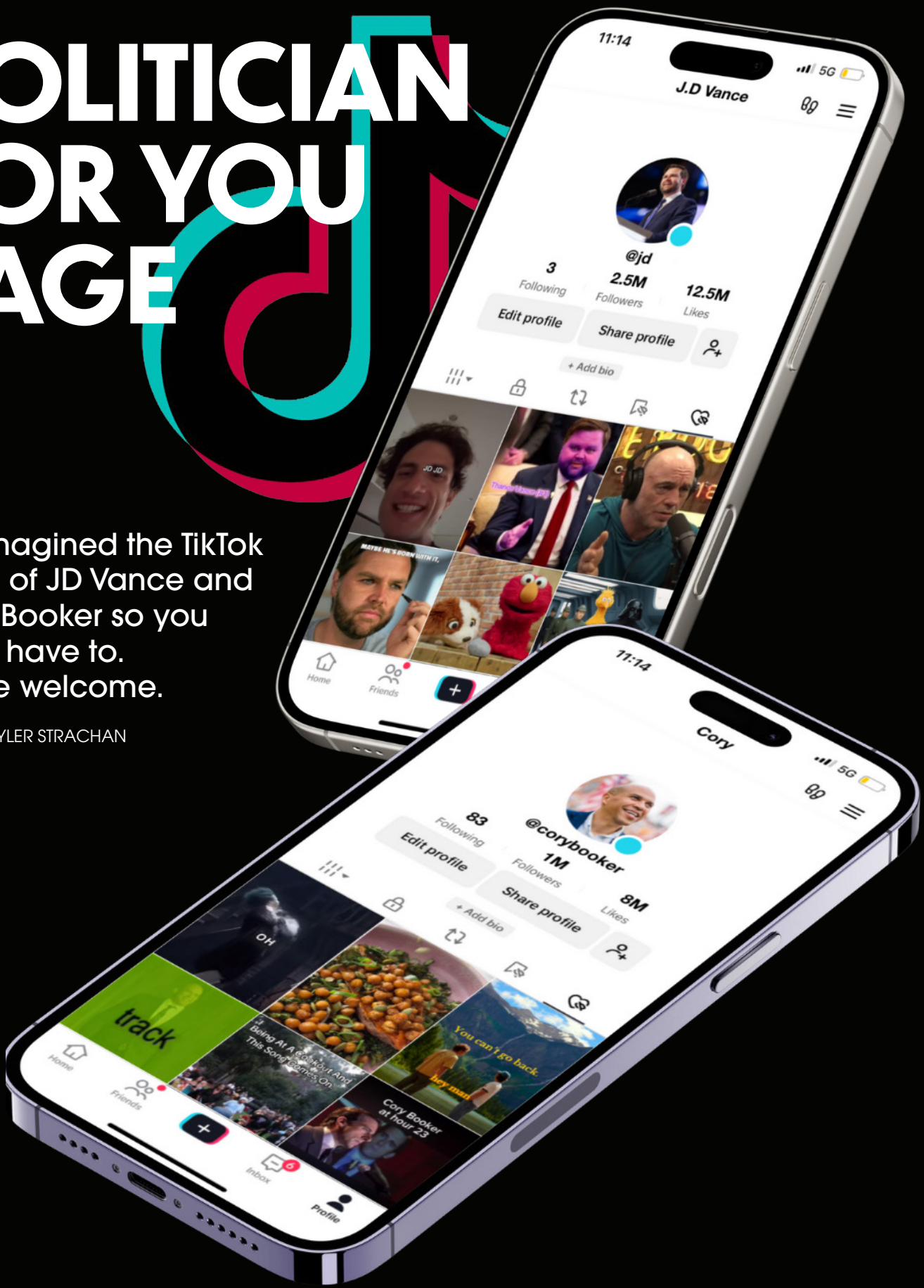
The slogan also speaks to his immense strength. After all, nothing could knock him down, especially not a piece of tape on the back door of the Watergate. Nixon has most definitely lived up to his namesake and cemented his legacy forever as America's Dick!

These slogans reflect the maturity and integrity of American elections. Politics has always been a serious affair in which candidates stick to policy and keep their criticisms and slogans above the belt. This historic civility is a trend that is sure to continue, upholding the integrity of the democratic process for all generations to come!

POLITICIAN FOR YOU PAGE

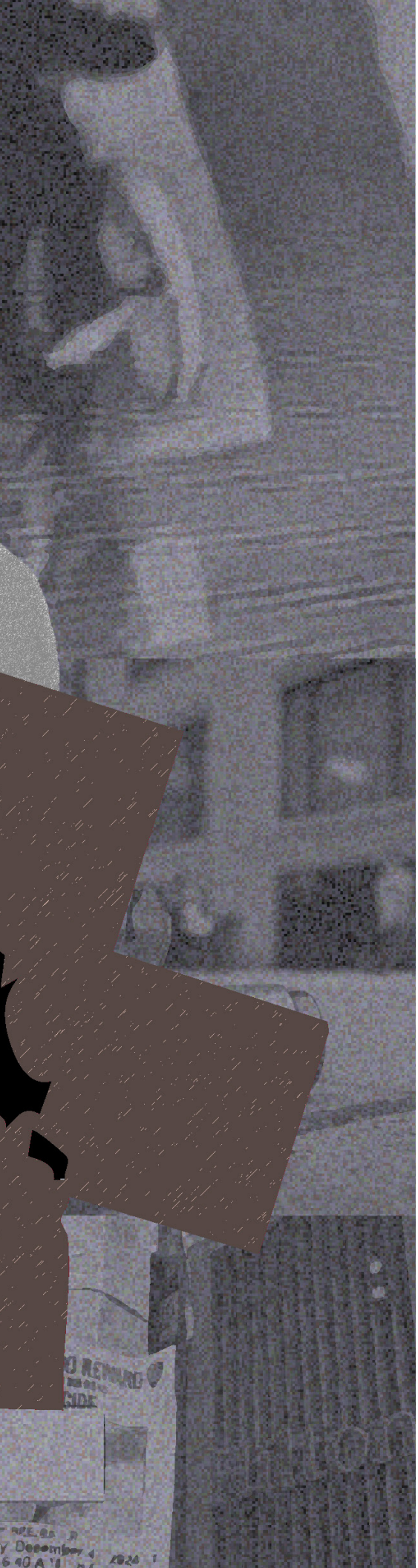
We imagined the TikTok feeds of JD Vance and Cory Booker so you don't have to. You're welcome.

DESIGN TYLER STRACHAN



INDUSTRY IN SHAMBLES

WORDS NORAH JUDSON **DESIGN** TYLER STRACHAN



Recent media attention to the healthcare industry has people calling for reform. Will change come before it's too late?

As the sun rose on the streets of New York City on Dec. 4, 2024, the CEO of United Healthcare, Brian Thompson, was fatally shot. Uproar ensued. In the weeks following the shooting, discourse began to emerge online. The internet was outraged — but not at the killer. Instead of rallying around the deceased, almost immediately, both the media and the public glommed onto his alleged killer — a man named Luigi Mangione — though not everyone agreed on which aspects of the case they were supporting.

For some, Mangione's actions represented gripes they had with the healthcare system but were not gutsy enough to voice. For others, it was just another case of fangirls gone wild, with many in Generation Z zeroing in on Mangione's looks and using them to justify his actions — or at the very least to soften the blow of what he had done.

This is not the first time the internet has found itself fascinated with a killer, however, this particular instance adds nuance to the usual narrative. In this case, things aren't so black and white.

Politics and violence often go hand in hand, with many influential figures throughout history having been killed by someone with political motives. What makes the Thompson case different is that Thompson was not a politician and neither was his killer. Both men were regular, everyday people — until they weren't.

Suddenly, their faces and their stories were splashed across the front page of every major news outlet, begging the question: Was this what Thompson's killer had wanted?

Who was Brian Thompson?

As described by angry social media users, the dead man, Brian Thompson, was nothing more than a faceless CEO at United Healthcare Group Inc. — but underneath the press, Thompson was a real man with a real life.

At the time of his death, Thompson was 50 years old. He was a husband to Paulette Thompson and the father of two sons. He was originally from Ames, Iowa.

According to CBS News, Thompson held many roles at UHC over the 20 years he worked for the company before becoming CEO, including chief financial officer for UHC's Employer and Individual, Community and State, and Medicare and Retirement businesses; financial controller for the Employer and Individual business; and director in the corporate development division.

It is worth mentioning that Thompson's total income in 2023 amounted to $10.2 million. For those who have faced hardship at the hands of the healthcare industry, a sum that inflated has more than just the potential to rub an upset customer the wrong way.

With that in mind, even though real-life testimonials paint Thompson as having been a down-to-earth family man, on paper, it is hard to deny that he fits the bill as another classic corporate miscreant.

However, appearances can be deceiving. While speaking at an investor meeting in 2023, Thompson stated that healthcare should be easier and that the industry should prioritize a shift toward value-based care. Whether or not these words reflect United Healthcare's values as a whole, they serve as a blunt reminder that there are many layers to every situation.

Since Thompson's death, the narrative surrounding the healthcare industry has been exceedingly negative, with little to no focus on the steps that have actually been taken toward reform.

The Backstory

As a 26-year-old graduate of the University of Pennsylvania hailing from a high-profile Maryland family, Mangione had a bright future laid out in front of him. All of that was squandered in the split second it took him to allegedly fire the gun that killed Thompson.

So why would he allegedly do it?

It wasn't necessarily a thirst for bloodshed that allegedly drove Mangione to violence. Like many Americans, Mangione shouldered substantial complaints regarding the healthcare system in the United States.

Throughout his life, Mangione dealt with "debilitating" back pain. This back pain eventually drove him to seek medical attention, though according to an article published by the BBC on Dec. 17, 2024, it is unclear how much of his anger toward the healthcare industry actually originated from his own personal experience.

The Healthcare Industry

According to the Commonwealth Fund, United States citizens face more barriers to accessing affordable healthcare than anywhere else in the world. This alone would be frustrating enough, but these aren't the only issues Americans have to deal with.

Shruthi Pragalsingh, a health sciences major at the University of Minnesota Rochester who works as a patient care assistant at the Mayo Clinic, said she didn't have "that absurd of a response" to Thompson's death.

"I understand how people get to [that] point," Pragalsingh said. "I've seen it in my own work, and I've seen it on the streets of Rochester itself. Our homeless community is very, very big and it's growing, mostly due to the fact that people get these treatments, and then they can't afford to keep paying for that and housing, so they get displaced."

> "What Republicans have tried to do in the past is to have cheaper policies available, they just cover less in ways that maybe people may not be aware of what they don't cover."
>
> **JUNE CARBONE,**
> ROBINA CHAIR IN LAW, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LAW SCHOOL



The health insurance industry has been described by the American Hospital Association as "inadequate," a term that many would say is far too kind. The same organization reported that Americans were collectively in $220 billion of medical debt as of July 2024.

Many Americans are inadequately insured or have no insurance at all. This report clashes with the health insurance industry's message that they intend to protect policyholders from unexpected costs or hospital bills that are flat-out unaffordable.

A report from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners' Consumer Representatives found that in many cases, the way insurance companies disclose information about their policies is designed to keep policyholders in the dark about what they are signing up for, leaving out key information about what certain procedures entail and how much policyholders will actually be paying.

"This is where a lot of the political controversy comes in," said June Carbone, the Robina Chair in law, science, and technology at the University of Minnesota Law School. "What Republicans have tried to do in the past is to have cheaper policies available; they just cover less in ways that maybe people may not be aware of what they don't cover."

Reformation in Action

"I really want to be able to just provide care and be 'people over profit,' rather than 'profit over people,'" Pragalsingh said. "I think a lot of people in healthcare share that same view of wanting to help people, and then they get to a point where they can't do anything else because it's fully [up to] the insurance company."

According to Carbone, in order for reform to occur in the health insurance industry, more emphasis needs to be placed on government programs like Medicare and Medicaid.

"The advantage of having a government system that says you have to cover a minimum number of services [is that] it helps prevent fraud," Carbone said. "That'd actually be a much more efficient system. I mean, you just opt into a pre-existing government program relatively easily administratively compared to managing the exchanges."

When an event as tragic as Thompson's death occurs, it is natural for tough conversation to arise in its wake — and where conversation goes, reform often follows.

As for those already working in the field, the events of Dec. 4 served to reinforce convictions they already held.

"[Thompson's death] definitely strengthens my belief in why I want to go into [healthcare] and how important the work is," Pragalsingh said. "Especially with figuring out how systems work and how we can navigate those systems to benefit patients rather than harm them."

" I really want to be able to just provide care and be 'people over profit,' rather than 'profit over people.' I think a lot of people in healthcare share that same view of wanting to help people, and then they get to a point where they can't do anything else because it's fully (up to) the insurance company. "

SHRUTHI PRAGALSINGH,
PATIENT CARE ASSISTANT AT THE MAYO CLINIC



ECHOES OF OUR POLITICAL PAST



As debates intensify, FDR's New Deal and Reagan's conservatism continue to shape the politics of today's America.

WORDS JACK MALINSKI **DESIGN** EMILY ZELLER

Party realignment has continuously redefined American political history, denoting party shifts in ideologies, voter bases and policy priorities. Political theorists suggest that every several decades, these shifts realign each party with its historical origins or significantly redefine its coalition.

By examining connections between today's Democratic and Republican parties to their respective pasts, it becomes clear that this cyclical transformation has fostered revolutionary political developments.

Democrats

Today's Democratic Party draws heavily from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal initiatives. Under FDR, the party solidified its commitment to social justice, government management of the economy and the protection of marginalized communities.

These themes are reflected in the Democratic platform today, particularly in policies centered around reproductive rights, racial justice and broader human rights initiatives.

The party's push for reproductive autonomy has become a defining issue of modern politics, echoing the struggle for women's rights that gained momentum during the 20th century.

Following the Supreme Court's reversal of Roe v. Wade, Democrats have positioned themselves as defenders of reproductive freedom, a continuation of their historic alignment with social welfare.

The broader push for human rights, including LGBTQ+ protections, labor rights and immigration reform, further ties the contemporary Democratic

> "While Democrats traditionally represented more working-class interests, many of these voters see the party as indifferent to the economic changes that devastated their communities."
>
> **NATHAN CARRINGTON,**
> POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR AT SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

Party to its historical roots in social justice. The party continues to define itself as a standard-bearer for progressive social policies by expanding rights and protections for historically marginalized groups.

Despite the Democratic Party's connection to FDR's robust New Deal coalition, it is struggling to maintain the broad voter base that once defined its dominance. The issues that once created united support are now creating deep fractures.

As the party leans further into social progressivism and identity politics, it risks alienating the working-class voters who were once central to its coalition, particularly blue-collar voters in the Rust Belt and rural America.

"Many of these voters viewed the [Democratic] party as drifting away from their values, especially on issues like patriotism, religion, gun rights and immigration," said Nathan Carrington, a political science professor at Saint Louis University. "As that disconnect got bigger, the party became more associated with elites."

Meanwhile, the economic populism that once defined the New Deal agenda has been overshadowed by cultural and ideological battles, leaving some voters feeling disconnected from a party they once viewed as their champion.

The Democratic Party's focus on social justice and climate policies often struggles to resonate with economically anxious middle-class America.

"While Democrats traditionally represented more working-class interests, many of these voters see the party as indifferent to the economic changes that devastated their communities," Carrington said.

Republicans

Just as the Democratic Party's focus reflects its New Deal roots, today's Republican Party finds its roots in the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

Reagan's tenure in the 1980s marked a major conservative realignment, emphasizing limited government, free-market economics and a strong national identity characterized by traditional values. Many of these principles have carried over into the modern GOP, particularly through the influence of Donald Trump and his "Make America Great Again" movement.

MAGA serves as a direct link between Reagan-era conservatism and today's Republican rhetoric. The slogan "Make America Great Again" was originally used by Reagan during his 1980 campaign, symbolizing a call to restore the country's perceived greatness.

While Reagan framed this revival in terms of economic growth and American nationalism, Trump's version of the slogan has been infused with themes of not only nationalism but skepticism toward the globalist America and a rejection of liberal cultural shifts.

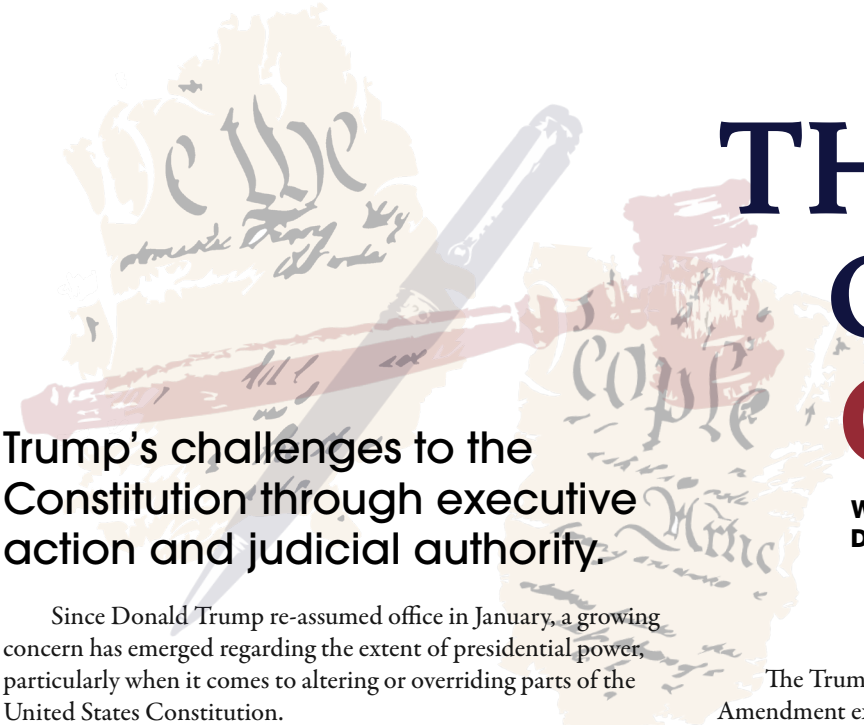
"Since Trump's rise back in 2016, many [Republicans] began to think of globalization with things like job loss to foreigners and wage stagnation in their minds," Carrington said, explaining the Republican shift in ideals. "The realignment has less to do with any actual policy specifics and more to do with identity and threat to their status."

Additionally, what constitutes a "great" America remains a fractious issue for the Republican identity. For Reagan's era, it meant economic prosperity, strong national defense and traditional morals. For Trump and his supporters, it has come to represent opposition to perceived cultural decline, a defense of traditional America and rejection of political correctness.

This evolving definition of "greatness" underscores how the Republican Party has maintained its ideological core while shifting in response to contemporary political and social forces.

The pattern of party realignment suggests that American politics and parties are not static. They evolve in response to societal norms, economic changes and generational differences.

As the Democratic and Republican parties continue to redefine their platforms, their ties to past leaders and movements remain prominent. Whether the current political moment represents another major realignment remains an open question, but the echoes of history are unmistakable.



THE PEN? OR THE GAVEL?

Trump's challenges to the Constitution through executive action and judicial authority.

WORDS RILEY PALMER
DESIGN TYLER STRACHAN

Since Donald Trump re-assumed office in January, a growing concern has emerged regarding the extent of presidential power, particularly when it comes to altering or overriding parts of the United States Constitution.

Throughout the Constitution's 236-year history, thousands of proposed amendments have been introduced, but only 27 have been successfully passed. The most recent amendment was adopted in 1992.

Unlike other countries where amendments are frequently introduced and passed, the U.S. has a unique and rigorous process that often results in only a few amendments making it through.

One of the first actions of the Trump Administration in January 2025 was the signing of Executive Order 14160, titled "Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship." This executive order seeks to effectively end certain aspects of birthright citizenship, a fundamental principle enshrined in the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.

The 14th Amendment asserts that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside."

E.O. 14160 challenges the long-established interpretation of the 14th Amendment and raises questions about whether other parts of the Constitution are similarly up for reinterpretation during this administration and potentially those in the future.

In a 2018 interview with Axios on HBO, Trump claimed that his legal counsel assured him that birthright citizenship could be terminated through a constitutional amendment. However, he also expressed his belief that this could be accomplished through an executive order, a proposal he was unable to enact during his first term.

This push to challenge birthright citizenship is now a top priority in his second term and effectively marks the start of the battle between the pen and gavel.

In E.O. 14160, Trump acknowledges the historical injustice of the Dred Scott v. Sandford case, which notoriously excluded Black people from citizenship solely based on race. The Administration called this decision "shameful" and highlighted it as an example of a flawed constitutional interpretation. However, in the following section of the executive order, the Administration asserts that the 14th Amendment has never been interpreted to extend citizenship universally to everyone born in the United States.

The Trump Administration contends that the 14th Amendment excludes from birthright citizenship those born in the U.S. but not "subject to the jurisdiction thereof." This interpretation challenges the widely accepted understanding of the 14th Amendment among the legal community.

This is not the first time a president has attempted to implement a controversial executive order. In 1952, President Harry Truman issued an executive order allowing his secretary of commerce to oversee steel mills nationwide. The Supreme Court ruled this action unconstitutional.

Similarly, in 1996, an executive order issued by President Bill Clinton was found unlawful by the D.C. Court of Appeals, as it interfered with employers' rights in hiring practices. These historical examples highlight that the courts can strike down executive actions when presidents overstep legal boundaries.

The Trump Administration's efforts to end birthright citizenship through E.O. 14160 have already faced opposition in the courts. Multiple courts across the country have started to block the Administration's attempts to discard birthright citizenship, indicating that the legality of such actions will continue to be challenged.

The courts are not the only ones fighting back. Trump and his lawyers in late February through March 2025 issued a series of executive orders targeting the largest law firms in the country. Many of these law firms are involved in anti-Trump lawsuits or uphold diversity, equity and inclusion policies, both of which the administration adamantly opposed.

These executive orders have been described as retaliatory by attorneys, judges and others in the legal field, and the effects are already starting to show.

In the process of writing this article, despite its nonpartisan nature, out of the 60+ legal and political experts that were contacted, there was a resounding non-response or declining to comment due to fear of retaliation from the Executive Branch. However, multiple lawyers referred to articles on how the Administration is metaphorically killing them with attacks on the legal field as we know it.

For the foreseeable future, this battle between the pen and the gavel will endure and only time will tell who will come out on top.

AUTOCRACY
Close to Home?

WORDS MACK SWENSON **DESIGN** TYLER STRACHAN

Countries don't become authoritarian overnight. Throughout history, numerous democracies have slid into autocracy. Could it happen here in the United States?



Federal employees asked to sign loyalty cards or resign, independent watchdogs fired without cause, funding ordered to be cut without warning — executive actions like these have earned President Donald Trump's administration an air of notoriety around the globe.

His administration's actions have also prompted accusations of a political nature shunned in the so-called "land of the free": authoritarianism.

The rise of autocratic governance, referred to academically as democratic erosion, is often gradual. It's marked by increasing abuses of power and human rights violations.

For democracy to erode, institutions meant to serve the public must be 'captured' by entities who have other interests in mind.

That begs the question: Could the executive branch capture American institutions under Trump's leadership?

The Evolving Reality of U.S. Democracy

Scholars used to debate whether democratic backsliding was isolated to poorer countries, especially recently formed countries. Recent U.S. events have put that debate to rest, said Kenneth Roberts, a professor of government at Cornell University.

"The conventional wisdom tells us that democracy is safe in wealthy societies. I think that can totally be re-assessed," Roberts said.

Freedom House and the Sweden-based Democracy Project have suggested that democracy is declining worldwide, following decades of global democratization. But why? Some scholars have speculated that democracy "outdid itself," Roberts said, especially in countries that didn't have "strong preconditions" for democracy.

The U.S., though, has strong preconditions for democracy — at least according to popular narrative. Roberts called that narrative into question, noting that minority groups in the U.S. have faced — and often continue to face — restrictions on their fundamental democratic rights.

"I think it's highly problematic to think of the United States as a democratic regime prior to 1965 because you can't have some national single-party rule in 11 states blocking a certain sector of the population. That is obviously undemocratic," Roberts said.

According to Roberts, some ideological groups in the U.S. have continued to question the rights of certain communities to participate in politics, indicating ongoing "anti-democratic cultural and political currents."

Even the face of the American political system might not be as democratic as it outwardly advertises. Jeffrey Weiss, an adjunct professor of political science at Des Moines Area Community College, says the political infrastructure of the U.S. — mainly its identity as a presidential republic — isn't even favorable to democracy.

Almost all other presidential republics in Africa and South America, many of which modeled their systems after the U.S., have changed their constitution in some way.

"There are three South American countries that had the Electoral College because they basically copied the U.S. Constitution. They all got rid of it," Weiss said. "A lot of South American countries, after they had military dictatorships and executive dictatorships, changed their constitutions to allow for proportional representation [or] one-term presidencies."

Check and Balances — or the Lack Thereof

Lately, the U.S. hasn't looked like the bastion of strong democracy it's historically purported to be. Notably, Trump has publicly called for the impeachment of judges he doesn't agree with — behavior Weiss described as "clearly authoritarian" because it attempts to avert checks and balances by the judicial branch.

Federal district judges have blocked a number of Trump's executive orders, including orders to freeze congressional spending to organizations like the United States Agency for International Development. Freezing congressional spending is not within the executive branch's authority, according to the Constitution. Yet Congress has done little to fight back.

"[Trump] has issued a whole number of executive orders that a normal Congress that has the power of oversight would be launching hearings and would be challenging through legislation. Unfortunately, the leadership of the Congress today has decided to not fulfill their responsibilities under the Constitution," Weiss said.

What happens if the executive branch does not comply with a judicial order? According to Weiss, that remains to be seen.

"The federal district courts, the press and the population are the three checks that remain, at least until the midterms of November 2026," Weiss said.

Trump is likely to challenge the judicial branch's authority. That's because his understanding of political authority is "highly autocratic" due to his business experience, Roberts said.

> " He has no reservations about conflating his role as an elected public official with his private economic interests. "
>
> **KENNETH ROBERTS,**
> PROFESSOR OF GOVERMENT AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

> " It doesn't matter if it's left or right. Authoritarianism is dangerous. You either have the rule of law, or you don't. "

JEFFREY WEISS, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Another distinguishing characteristic of Trump's approach to the presidency is his meetings with business entities, including the sovereign wealth fund in Saudi Arabia, which has invested money in his son-in-law's business activities.

"He has no reservations about conflating his role as an elected public official with his private economic interests," Roberts said.

In another departure from past presidents, Trump is no longer aligning himself with democratic leaders. Roberts said Trump's administration appears to identify more with autocratic leaders in other parts of the world, like Russian President Vladimir Putin, as evidenced by Trump's rebuke of Ukrainian President Zelensky.

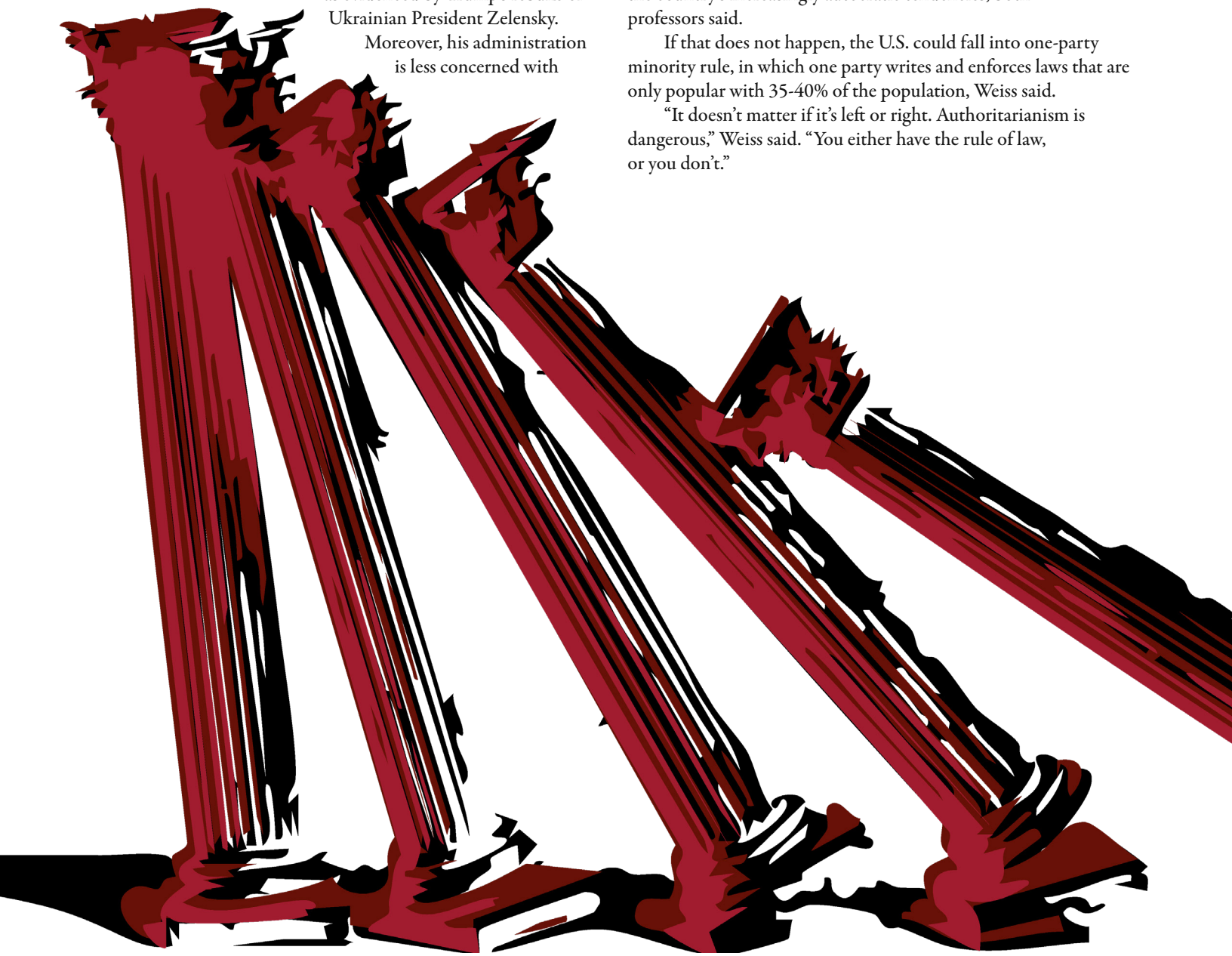
Moreover, his administration is less concerned with supporting Democratic norms. For instance, Vice President JD Vance declined to meet with Germany's democratically elected leader in February, instead choosing to meet with the far-right leader who came in second place.

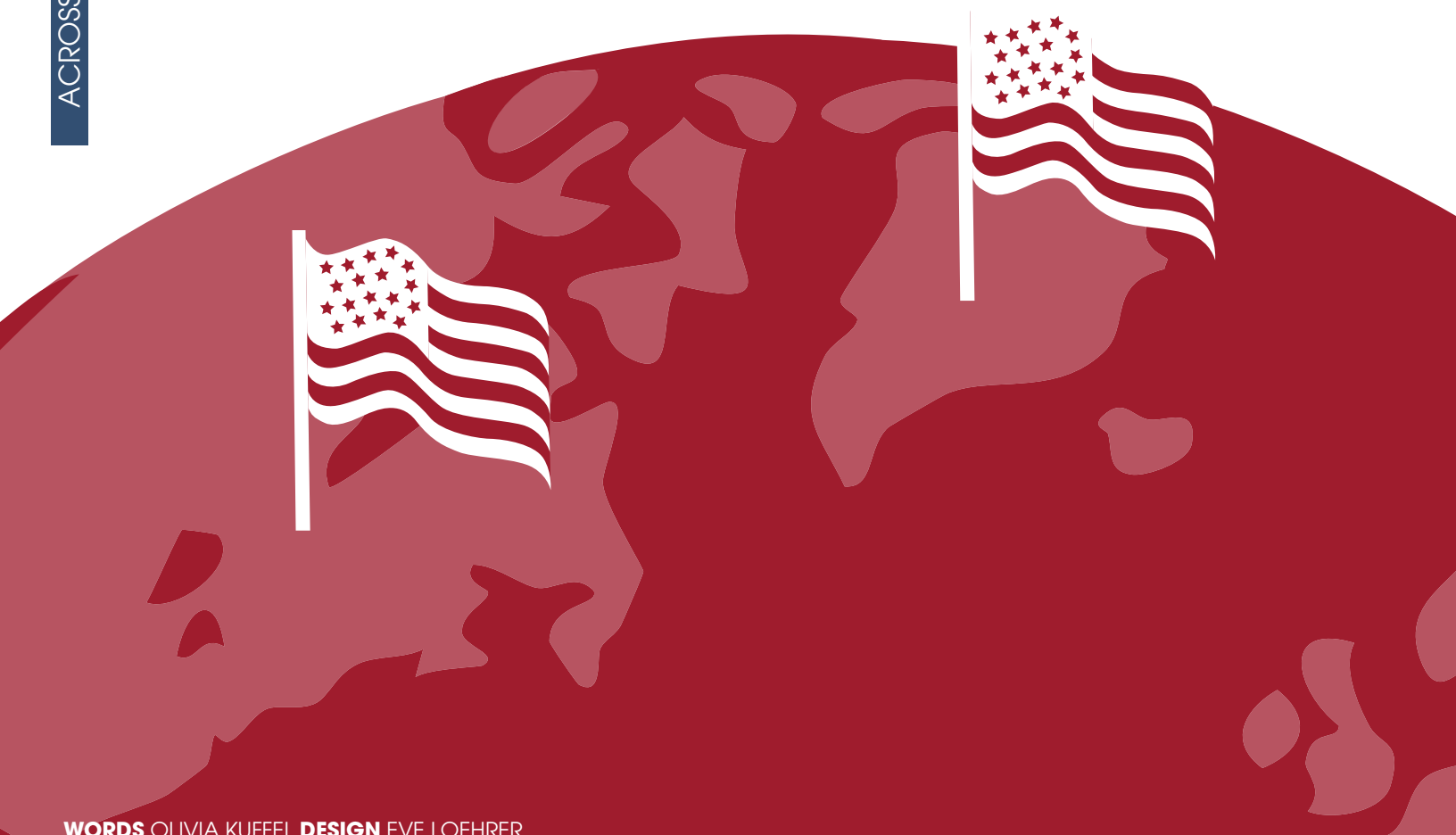
Trump might be more the symptom than the cause of what many see as America's plutocracy (a system ruled by wealth), Weiss said. The "government of corporations and the rich" have strongly influenced the government, he said, as indicated by the 13 billionaires who currently sit in Trump's cabinet.

Where does the U.S. go from here? It's not too late to reverse the country's increasingly autocratic tendencies, both professors said.

If that does not happen, the U.S. could fall into one-party minority rule, in which one party writes and enforces laws that are only popular with 35-40% of the population, Weiss said.

"It doesn't matter if it's left or right. Authoritarianism is dangerous," Weiss said. "You either have the rule of law, or you don't."





WORDS OLIVIA KUFFEL **DESIGN** EVE LOEHRER

MR. WORLDWIDE

THE NEW FACE OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM?

From Greenland to Gaza, Trump's bold assertions of U.S. control blur the line between isolationism and expansionism.



The Western world has a long history of imperialism. From the 16th through 20th centuries, British, French and Spanish empires spread across the globe, imbuing imperialism with the meaning it's associated with today — a process through which one country extends power and influence over another territory, typically in an exploitative or unjust way; and often for political power, economic gain or social assimilation.

While Atlantic rebellions and post-WWII decolonization movements have de-legitimized imperialism, the United States — and other nations — are often criticized as imperialistic.

Despite throwing off its former colonial power, the United States became an imperialist power as it pursued the idea of manifest destiny and subsequently subjugated native peoples. In the 19th century, U.S. imperialism through overseas expansion culminated in U.S. control of Hawaii, the Philippines and Latin America.

While imperialism is commonly associated with past centuries, it can be argued that modern superpowers still practice imperialism. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 triggered accusations of neocolonialism, China's Belt and Road Initiative has been heralded as expansionist, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (and of Crimea in 2014) demonstrates clear imperialist tendencies.

Trump's Seeming Imperialism

Both on the campaign trail and since he took office, Donald Trump has raised accusations of imperialism from critics. Trump has refused to rule out military or economic force to take control of Greenland or the Panama Canal, which he views as integral to security and trade dominance. Trump has repeatedly touted the idea of Canada becoming the 51st American state, even suggesting to former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that the nation become a U.S. state to avoid paying tariffs.

When Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited D.C. during the week of Feb. 3, Trump suggested that the U.S. take control of the Gaza Strip, remove Palestinians from their homes and turn the land into a resort. All of these actions — and others — have seemingly created a new type of American imperialism under Trump's leadership.

Sara Newland, Ph.D., an associate professor of government at Smith College, points to the inconsistent messaging that Trump has put out.



For example, Trump wrote on social media that "War is far more important to Europe than it is to us. We have a big, beautiful ocean as separation," which may give the impression that he's not interested in involvement abroad. But his remarks about Gaza, Canada and Greenland would suggest that he does have interests in expanding American control.

"One of the things complicated about assessing Trump's foreign policy is he has contradictory impulses and advisors who are not on the same page," Newland said. "He clearly has some impulses that are expansionist and some that are focused on a much more isolationist, America first approach. And it's too early to tell which set of those will win out."

Ron McMullen, Ph.D., the University of Iowa's ambassador in residence, views Trump first and foremost as transactionalist.

"What Trump is doing is very odd for most American presidents who have typically supported the liberal international order," McMullen said. "I don't think Trump is an isolationist. I think he no longer wants the United States to play the role of benign hegemon that supports the liberal international order and is willing to pay to keep international organizations going."

Domestic Reactions

Trump's drastic change in U.S. foreign policy has triggered strong objections from members of the Democratic Party. However, the Republican Party doesn't appear to have a unified stance towards Trump's apparent imperialist ambitions.

"It's been really weird to watch the silence of the Republican Party over the last few days as Trump has parroted Putin's talking points and completely abandoned the position the U.S. has held for Ukraine for the last three years," Newland said.

But Ukraine also provides an example of internal fragmentation within the Republican party.

Even during Biden's presidency, Republicans in Congress often opposed financial or military aid to Ukraine after mid-2023. Now, the decision of whether or not the U.S. ought to provide support to allies has been expanded far past the scope of Ukraine.

"The Republican coalition is in a complicated place. Traditional Republicans want a strong U.S. military and think that support to our allies is appropriate. But there's a rising isolationist wing within that that says the U.S. shouldn't be giving aid to foreign countries," Newland said.

Newland discussed the individuals that have expressed disagreement with Trump regarding his foreign policy. Sen. Rand Paul, a Republican from Kentucky, wrote on social media, "I thought we voted for America First," in critique of Trump's plans to establish an American presence in Gaza.



> "I worry that the stated commitment to isolationism could invite other countries to engage in military aggression that they have thought were too risky in the past."
>
> **DR. SARA NEWLAND,** ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF GOVERNMENT AT SMITH COLLEGE

But there may be differing interpretations of what America first means.

"America first is different from isolationism," McMullen said. "America first is the principle that we need to think about America's interest, not the international order's interest."

Longtime Republican Lindsey Graham, a senator from South Carolina, spoke out against that same plan, calling it "problematic" and linking past American involvement in the Middle East to long-term conflict.

"But there hasn't been a joint cohesive attempt to push back [at Trump's foreign policy approach] at all," Newland said.

International Implications

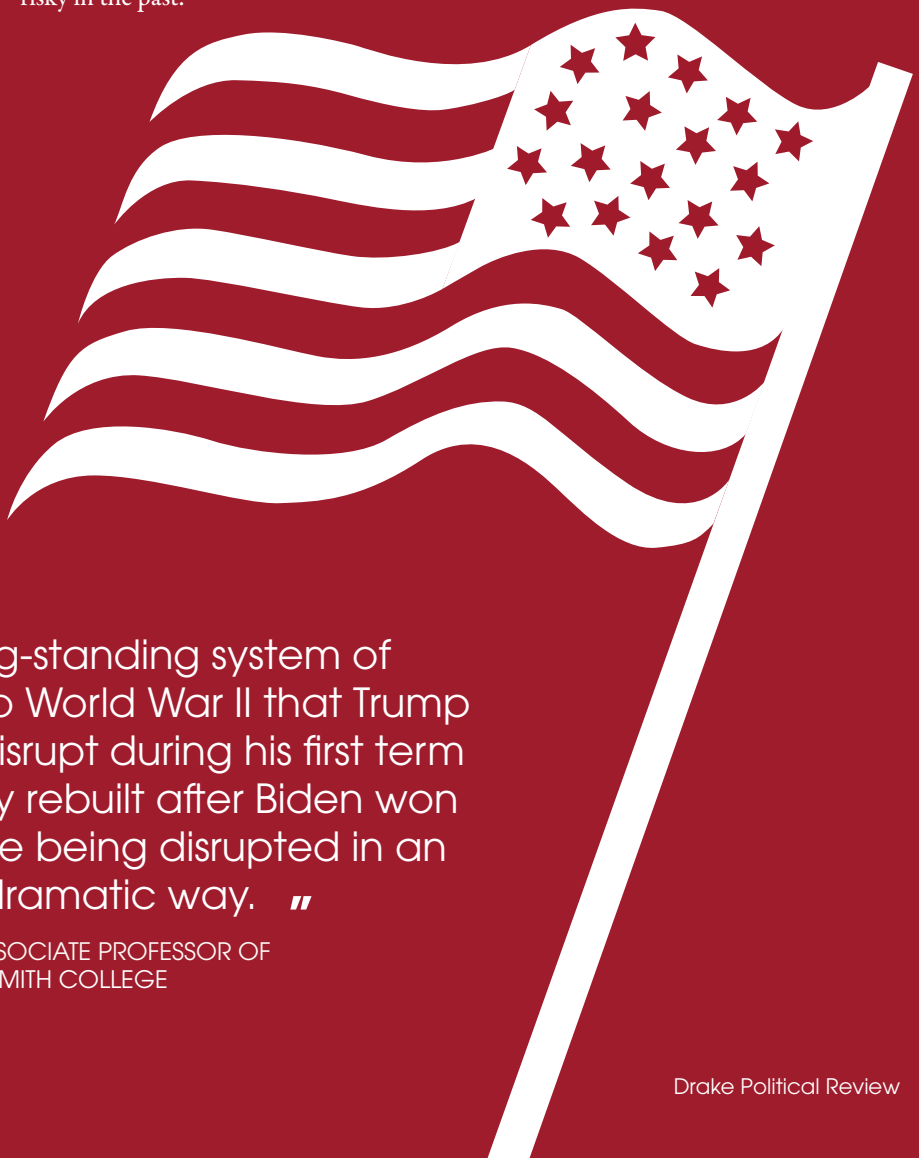
On the international scale, alliances are also at an inflection point amidst destabilizing rhetoric about U.S. involvement overseas.

"There's a sort of long-standing system of alliances dating back to World War II that Trump really worked hard to disrupt during his first term that had to be carefully rebuilt after Biden won in 2020. But now they're being disrupted in an even more dramatic way," Newland said.

Part of that disruption comes after Trump has refocused foreign policy to center U.S. interests over global ones by pulling out of international organizations such as the World Health Organization and freezing the operations of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Newland explained that countries like Russia and China, able and interested in filling the void that the U.S. is creating by withdrawing internationally, could take action in order to gain power. She worries that China will view a military invasion of Taiwan as less risky because of Trump's reduced commitments to allies and to maintaining international peace and security.

"The fact is that the U.S. has, in the past, had the capacity and willingness to try to prevent global problems. That power has not always been used for good, but there are cases where it has deterred conflict," Newland said. "I worry that the stated commitment to isolationism could invite other countries to engage in military aggression that they have thought were too risky in the past."



" There's a sort of long-standing system of alliances dating back to World War II that Trump really worked hard to disrupt during his first term that had to be carefully rebuilt after Biden won in 2020. But now they're being disrupted in an even more dramatic way. "

DR. SARA NEWLAND, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF GOVERNMENT SMITH COLLEGE

DEMOCRACY FOR SALE!

Rule of the Few, Wealth of the Fewer

WORDS VANISHA KRISHNANI **DESIGN** EMILY ZELLER

The term "oligarchy" is used quite frequently in today's world and media. However, what does this term imply?

According to Aristotle, oligarchy involves the exercise of power by the richest citizens – who happen always to be the few. It is essentially an exclusive form of governance that concentrates economic and political influence in the hands of a few wealthy people.

Various definitions and descriptions were disseminated 2,400 years ago by philosophers. But can they still be applied to our world today? Are there modern nations that can fit into this description? World Population Review claims that China, Russia, Iran, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Ukraine, North Korea, Saudi Arabia and arguably even the United States are considered oligarchies.

Real-time Oligarchies

While the WPR classifies Iran and Russia as oligarchies, what specific characteristics define them as one? In the Russian context, oligarchs are the ultra-wealthy business elites with disproportionate political power.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a surge of privatization swept over Russia. State-owned enterprises fell apart like a house of cards, and the most valuable parts of the Russian economy were sold to tycoons chosen by President Boris Yeltsin.

In 2000, President Vladimir Putin took over Russia, ushering in a new generation of oligarchs. Through lucrative state contracts, private suppliers overcharged the government at prices way above the market rate. The cash, however, found its way into the pockets of state officials, leading to a financially and politically affluent class under Putin.

The Journal of Democracy categorises Iran as a "clerical oligarchy." The 1979 Theocratic Project led to an exclusionary governance. Any non-Islamist elements were eradicated from the

constitution, governance and alienated from society.

The journal also points out how Iran witnessed "regular reports of embezzlement" under their oligarchic political system. Additionally, the nation missed out on qualified politicians, since "56% of the official hires made during the administration of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad were illegal."

An Atlantic Council article further demonstrates how children of these elite leaders, known as aghazadehs, are often spotted with Lamborghinis and opulent accessories. Their exorbitant lifestyle reveals the truth of the financial gains they have accrued due to their political power.

A lot of these nations have core elements quite similar to a very nation known for liberty, freedom and democracy, but not oligarchy.

From Moscow to Wall Street

This said nation is the United States, where the world's richest man and the president not only share a friendship but also a working relationship.

Tesla owner Elon Musk was appointed to head the Department of Government Efficiency, which essentially cuts governmental departments and eliminates 'inefficient' people from jobs.

"How is this America first when a non-American is firing Americans?" asked Rep. Rob Johnson of the Iowa House.

Just like any other oligarchy, there is no shortage of elites in this government. Linda McMahon donated $6 million to Trump's Rebuilding America Now campaign. Currently, she is serving as the Education Department's secretary despite never having taught a classroom, as representative Rob Johnson points out.

Johnson also highlighted how the nation misses out on qualified candidates because money buys unsuitable people powerful positions better suited for other candidates.

He also commented how Pete Hegseth, the Secretary of Defense, has never managed more than 400 people under him and now he is in charge of one of the most powerful militaries on the planet.

U.S. News and World Report claims the total net worth of billionaires in Trump's cabinet amounts to around $382 billion, which is more than the GDP of 172 nations.

> " We have all failed if we cannot help the nation's middle class. "
>
> **ROB JOHNSON,** IOWA HOUSE

> " How is this America first when a non-American is firing Americans? "
>
> **ROB JOHNSON,** IOWA HOUSE

A Rich Robin Hood

Why is an American oligarchy a negative? On Feb. 25, 2025, the House passed the Republicans' budget resolution. This budget plan laid the groundwork to extend the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, a package of tax breaks enacted during Trump's first term.

Democratic U.S. Representative Richard Neal claims, "[It's a] tax bill that increases our national debt by $4 trillion, $5 trillion, or even as much as $10 trillion".

He went on to say that these would essentially take money from the poor and give it to the rich, making it a "reverse Robin Hood scam."

"We have all failed if we cannot help the nation's middle class," Johnson said.

He believes that money could never trickle all the way down, especially not to the lowest sections of our society. The concept of a trickle-down economy has proven to be a flood for few and a drought for many.

Even though billionaires are perceived as geniuses who won capitalism by some, others view them as self-serving or even a danger to democracy.



AN ELECTION BIGGER

The 2024 United States Presidential Election captured the attention of a global audience, making it a worldwide phenomenon.

WORDS GRACE RILEY **DESIGN** EMILY ZELLER

After winning the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election, President Donald Trump has received many warm congratulations from world leaders. However, the international public has reacted more adversely to the presidential win and has mobilized worldwide to protest President Trump's policies and their international impact.

Global Leaders' Reactions

There have been variations of congratulations from a myriad of world leaders, from ecstatic responses to pragmatic ones. Both Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog ecstatically congratulated Trump on his win via X, formerly known as Twitter.

"I believe that working together again, we will raise the Israel-U.S. alliance to even greater heights. I am confident that we will complete the defeat of Iran's terror access and usher in a new era of peace and prosperity for our region…and ensure that Gaza will never pose a threat to Israel," Prime Minister Netanyahu stated in a video message posted on X the day of Trump's inauguration.

THAN JUST **ONE COUNTRY**



Based on Trump's first term, Israel's leaders have a strong hope for leniency when dictating the terms of Gaza, as well as more cooperation regarding policies centered around Iran.

The most fervent congratulations Trump received were from South America's most conservative leaders, such as Argentinian President Javier Milei and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

A day after Trump's victory, Milei posted on X addressing Trump, "Congratulations on your formidable victory. Now, Make America Great Again. You know you can count on Argentina to carry out your task."

In February, Trump endorsed Milei in a speech at the 2025 Conservative Political Action Conference, stating, "He's a MAGA guy too. Make Argentina Great Again."

Other world leaders congratulated Trump on his victory on the basis of pragmatism. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy congratulated Trump a day after his victory, stating on X, "I appreciate Trump's commitment to the 'peace through strength' approach in global affairs. This is exactly the principle that can practically bring just peace in Ukraine closer. I am hopeful we will put it into action together."

U.S.-Ukrainian relations seemed to be somewhat stable until Russian President Vladimir Putin released a U.S. teacher, Marc Fogel, leading to discussions between Trump and Putin. The result of these discussions was devastating for Ukraine, as Trump announced that the U.S. and Russia would launch negotiations together to end the war in Ukraine. Trump left Special U.S. Envoy for Ukraine and Russia, General Jeith Kellogg, out of the negotiations.

"What do the people in Ukraine think of Trump? I don't know of anyone who feels that he is anything less than corrupt. They very, very much see him as being a Putin agent," said Angela Boelens, President and Founder of Iowa Newcomer Integration, Community and Exchange.



> " Ukrainians very, very much see Trump as being very, very similar to Putin. They've seen this type of bullying behavior and they've seen propaganda. They know what it looks like. "
>
> **ANGELA BOELENS,** PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF IOWA NEWCOMER INTEGRATION, COMMUNITY AND EXCHANGE

The little stability that the U.S.-Ukrainian relations had seemed to have been quashed. In the beginning weeks of February, U.S.-Russian relations have begun to flourish and deepen as Trump likened the Ukrainians to be the aggressors.

Former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also posted on X after Trump's victory, stating, "The friendship between Canada and the U.S. is the envy of the world. I know President Trump and I will work together to create more opportunity, prosperity, and security for both our nations."

However, when Trump took office, he began to throw punches by threatening to annex Canada and taunting Trudeau about tariffs.

While world leaders had rather positive public reactions, the international public was angry at the implications a second Trump presidency will bring, causing protests domestically and internationally.

> " Latinos in America feel very disillusioned as they are widely being ignored by this administration, especially in states with high Latino populations like California, Texas, and New Mexico. "
>
> **CARLOS MATUTES,** NEW MEXICO COMMUNITY ADVOCATE FOR GREEN LATIONS

Public Uproar

"Ukrainians very, very much see Trump as being very, very similar to Putin. They've seen this type of bullying behavior and they've seen propaganda. They know what it looks like," said Boelens. "These people are very familiar with how that can affect the citizens of a country. They understand it and he scares them."

Various protests occurred worldwide after Trump's inauguration. In Mexico City, Mexico and Panama City, Panama, protesters gathered outside the U.S. embassy to protest Trump's immigration policies. The protesters began burning U.S. flags and symbols of Trump.

"Latinos in America feel very disillusioned as they are widely being ignored by this administration, especially in states with high Latino populations like California, Texas and New Mexico," said Carlos Matutes, the New Mexico community advocate for Green Latinos. "To combat the Trump Administration's rhetoric and policies, the Latino community has really come together to advocate and fight for each other, but the halting of funding is really hurting organizations like ours and the community we serve."

In Europe, there have been multiple anti-Trump protests, most prominently in London, England and Brussels, Belgium. Most recently, the protests have reached Asia, specifically India. On Feb. 7, a massive protest occurred in New Delhi, India, outside of India's parliament building, following the deportation of Indian migrants.

Based on policy changes and continuous anti-immigration rhetoric, the international and domestic protests do not seem to be ceasing; for now, we can only observe how the rest of the world reacts to the president's agendas.

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