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THE LINCOLN PROJECT

We Are Republicans, and We Want Trump Defeated

The president and his enablers have replaced conservatism with an empty faith led by a bogus prophet.

By George T. Conway III, Steve Schmidt, John Weaver and Rick Wilson.

The authors have worked for or supported numerous Republican campaigns and administrations. This article was [originally published in The New York Times](#).

Patriotism and the survival of our nation in the face of the crimes, corruption and corrosive nature of Donald Trump are a higher calling than mere politics. As Americans, we must stem the damage he and his followers are doing to the rule of law, the Constitution and the American character.

That's why we are announcing the Lincoln Project, an effort to highlight our country's story and values, and its people's sacrifices and obligations. This effort transcends partisanship and is dedicated to nothing less than preservation of the principles that so many have fought for, on battlefields far from home and within their own communities.

This effort asks all Americans of all places, creeds and ways of life to join in the seminal task of our generation: restoring to this nation leadership and governance that respects the rule of law, recognizes the dignity of all people and defends the Constitution and American values at home and abroad.

Over these next 11 months, our efforts will be dedicated to defeating President Trump and Trumpism at the ballot box and to elect those patriots who will hold the line. We do not undertake this task lightly, nor from ideological preference. We have been, and remain, broadly conservative (or classically liberal) in our politics and outlooks. Our many policy differences with national Democrats remain, but our shared fidelity to the Constitution dictates a common effort.

The 2020 general election, by every indication, will be about persuasion, with turnout expected to be at record highs. Our efforts are aimed at persuading enough disaffected conservatives, Republicans and Republican-leaning independents in swing states and districts to help ensure a victory in the Electoral College and majorities that don't enable and abet Trump's violations of the constitution;

even if that means Democrat control of the Senate and expansion of the Democratic majority in the House.

The American presidency transcends the individuals who occupy the Oval Office. Their personality becomes part of our national character. Their actions become our actions, for which we all share responsibility. Their willingness to act in accordance with the law and our tradition dictate how current and future leaders will act. Their commitment to order, civility and decency are reflected in American society.

Mr. Trump fails to meet the bar for this commitment. He has neither the moral compass nor the temperament to serve. His vision is limited to what immediately faces him — the problems and risks he chronically brings upon himself and for which others, from countless contractors and companies to the American people, ultimately bear the heaviest burden.

But this president's actions are possible only with the craven acquiescence of congressional Republicans. They have done no less than abdicate their Article I responsibilities.

Indeed, national Republicans have done far worse than simply march along to Mr. Trump's beat. Their defense of him is imbued with an ugliness, a meanness and a willingness to attack and slander those who have shed blood for our country, who have dedicated their lives and careers to its defense and its security, and whose job is to preserve the nation's status as a beacon of hope.

Congressional Republicans have embraced and copied Mr. Trump's cruelty and defended and even adopted his corruption. Mr. Trump and his enablers have abandoned conservatism and longstanding Republican principles and replaced it with Trumpism, an empty faith led by a bogus prophet. In a recent survey, a majority of Republican voters reported that they consider Mr. Trump a better president than Lincoln.

Mr. Trump and his fellow travelers daily undermine the proposition we as a people have a responsibility and an obligation to continually bend the arc of history toward justice. They mock our belief in America as something more meaningful than lines on a map.

Our peril far outstrips any past differences: It has arrived at our collective doorstep, and we believe there is no other choice. We sincerely hope, but are not optimistic, that some of those Republicans charged with sitting as jurors in a likely Senate impeachment trial will do likewise.

American men and women stand ready around the globe to defend us and our way of life. We must do right by them and ensure that the country for which they daily don their uniform deserves their protection and their sacrifice.

We are reminded of [Dan Sickles](#), an incompetent 19th-century New York politician. On July 2, 1863, his blundering nearly ended the United States.

(Sickles's greatest previous achievement had been fatally shooting his wife's lover across the street from the White House and getting himself elected to Congress. Even his most fervent admirers could not have imagined that one day, far in the future, another incompetent New York politician, a president, would lay claim to that legacy by saying he could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and get away with it.)

On that day in Pennsylvania, Sickles was a major general commanding the Union Army's III Corps at the Battle of Gettysburg, and his incompetence wrought chaos and danger. The Confederate Army

took advantage, and turned the Union line. Had the rebel soldiers broken through, the continent would have been divided: Free and slave, democratic and authoritarian.

Another Union general, Winfield Scott Hancock, had only minutes to reinforce the line. America, the nation, the ideal, hung in the balance. Amid the fury of battle, he found the [First Minnesota Volunteers](#). They were immigrants. Many didn't speak English. They were the very people the Know Nothings tried to keep out of the country.

They charged, and many of them [fell](#), suffering a staggeringly high casualty rate. They held the line. They saved the Union. Four months later, Lincoln stood on that field of slaughter and said, "It is left to us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced."

We look to Lincoln as our guide and inspiration. He understood the necessity of not just saving the Union, but also of knitting the nation back together spiritually as well as politically. But those wounds can be bound up only once the threat has been defeated. So, too, will our country have to knit itself back together after the scourge of Trumpism has been overcome.

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