



OPINION

Endorsement: Joe Biden isn't just 'anybody but Trump.' He's the right fit for our polarized time



The Los Angeles Times editorial board endorses the Democratic ticket: Joe Biden for president and Kamala Harris for vice president. (Carolyn Kaster / Associated Press)

BY THE TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD

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This year's presidential election confronts voters with the most consequential choice they have faced in decades, and for many, their lifetimes: between a divisive, authoritarian-leaning incumbent and a seasoned patriot who brings not only five decades of experience, ability and commitment to American values, but also bold ideas at a time of national crisis. Nothing less than the health of our constitutional democracy is at stake.

So stark is the contrast between Donald Trump and Joe Biden that we feel compelled to announce our endorsement of the Democratic nominee and his running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris of California, now, at what is traditionally the beginning of the fall campaign and before the candidates take part in televised debates. We will watch those exchanges with interest, but it's inconceivable that anything that will be said on the debate stage will close the cavernous fitness gap between the two candidates.



OPINION

Los Angeles Times used to endorse only Republicans for president. What changed?

Sept. 10, 2020

Regular readers of this editorial page won't be surprised that we believe that the reelection of this president would be a calamity. Trump's [trafficking in falsehoods](#); his [stoking of racial divisions](#); his [inability to distinguish](#) between the national interest and his personal interests; his attempt to ride a [false and dangerous narrative](#) about "anarchy and mayhem" to reelection — all require repudiation by the voters. He has pursued policies at home and abroad that have harmed working Americans, exacerbated inequality, weakened the United States and strained America's alliances. Even actions that can be defended — such as his support for [modest criminal-justice reform](#) — or his attempt to negotiate an agreement with North Korea over its nuclear weapons program — have been marred by exaggerated claims or amateurish execution.

Trump's record easily justifies a position of "Anybody but Trump." But Biden isn't just preferable to Trump; in many respects he is Trump's antithesis.

Biden has a record of seeking expert advice and listening to it. Progressives may take issue with his choice of advisers, many of whom are establishment figures he's known for years. But he clearly has a level of respect for data, science and research that the incumbent does not. As 81 U.S. Nobel Prize winners in chemistry, physics and medicine wrote in an [open letter](#) endorsing Biden, "At no time in our nation's history has there been a greater need for our leaders to appreciate the value of science in formulating public policy."

Temperamentally, too, Biden seems like an ideal fit for our polarized time. A famously empathetic figure — he lost his wife and daughter in a car accident shortly after Delaware first elected him to the Senate in 1972 — he practices civility, champions compromise and seeks unity in a country Trump has divided with a cacophony of culture-war distractions. The contrast between [Biden's speech](#) accepting the Democratic nomination for the presidency, which was a call for Americans to come together, and [Trump's speech](#) accepting the Republican nomination, which promoted fear and loathing within the country, couldn't have been more pronounced.

**OPINION****Endorsement: The 2020 election is finally upon us. Here are the races in which the L.A. Times plans to endorse**

Sept. 6, 2020

Listening to the science validating climate change, repairing infrastructure, overhauling immigration policy, reforming campaign finance — these are all urgent tasks for the federal government, yet the current administration has ignored them. Biden would make climate change and clean energy central features of his approach to improving the economy, acknowledging the existential threat posed by the fossil-fuel industry.

Biden also has promised to provide leadership in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis Trump has badly mismanaged, costing hundreds of thousands of American lives. The former vice president recognizes that we need international cooperation and national direction because the coronavirus recognizes no boundaries. Trump has put his reelection first, instructing federal agencies to bend their policies to his politics; Biden promises to put science first. And rather than pretending that the economy is roaring back as the country digs itself out of a record-setting hole, Biden has pledged to continue sending federal dollars to small businesses, idled workers and others hit by the downturn.

Undoing the damage done by Trump will be essential, but it's not sufficient. The pandemic has thrown into depressing relief racial and economic inequities that long have festered. Meanwhile, the protests that followed the death of [George Floyd](#) in Minneapolis in police custody and other examples of police brutality have inspired a national reckoning about race that calls for dramatic action by the next president and Congress.

Biden, despite his record as a centrist, seems to realize that we must embrace bold initiatives to narrow racial and economic disparities that have long stood unaddressed. He has promised to promote racial equality across a [range of programs](#), from housing to federal procurement to job training to agriculture. He didn't call for reparations for African Americans in his racial equity proposal, but he is open to a study of the idea.

If it wasn't obvious before the pandemic that the American healthcare system was built on a fragile foundation, it's devastatingly clear now. Biden recognizes that. Although he hasn't embraced the "Medicare for all" approach championed by Sen. Bernie Sanders — who [won California's Democratic primary](#) — Biden offers a path forward on health policy that is a sharp break from the past four years, while still permitting continuity for the more than 150 million Americans who have employer-sponsored health insurance.

Biden's [plan](#) would extend affordable and comprehensive coverage to millions more people by making a public insurance plan like Medicare available to the uninsured, with subsidies for those with low and moderate incomes. Just about every action Trump has taken on this issue has raised the cost of comprehensive coverage, weakened protections for people with preexisting conditions and exposed people to more risk in pursuit of lower costs.

Likewise on tax and economic policy, Biden has promised to seek the [repeal of most tax cuts](#) enacted during the Trump administration and to pursue an increase in the [corporate tax rate](#) to 28%. We hope that if elected he will advocate

even more ambitious measures to narrow the yawning disparities of wealth and income in this society, some of them a direct consequence of entrenched racism, others the result of blind faith in the virtues of untrammeled capitalism.



OPINION

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Oct. 23, 2020

On the international scene, Biden has expressed support for enhancing the [NATO alliance](#) for which Trump has shown such contempt, rejoining the international agreement that placed limits on [Iran's nuclear program](#) if that nation returned to compliance, and returning to the [Paris climate change accord](#), while leading an effort to persuade every nation to accelerate its efforts to meet that challenge.

In dealing with Russia, Biden will not be blinkered by the blind spot that has prevented Trump from confronting Vladimir Putin over Russian meddling in the last U. S. election and other hostile acts. And while Biden, like Trump, has been critical of China, he believes he can counter Beijing's aggressiveness and its violations of human rights without provoking a cold war. Finally, while Biden has [praised warmer relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates](#) — an entente encouraged by the Trump administration — a Biden administration would be far more likely to press for an agreement in which a [Palestinian state would coexist with Israel](#), a prerequisite for lasting peace in the region.

Notably, dozens of Republican national security officials have endorsed Biden, [putting nation above party](#) and declaring that the former vice president “will restore the dignity of the presidency, bring Americans together, reassert America’s role as a global leader, and inspire our nation to live up to its ideals.”

Trump and his allies would have you believe that Biden is too diminished by age to handle the demands of the presidency. They seize on his frequent verbal gaffes and stumbles as symptoms of decline, as if the incumbent weren't the least articulate president in modern memory. Biden's problem is what he says when he flubs a line; Trump's problem is what he says when he speaks his mind.

If Biden is elected, he will face challenges unlike any president since Franklin D. Roosevelt. He will need bold policy ideas and the support of allies in Congress to push through a legislative agenda. Biden will need to take on a job greater than any one person, or any one generation: restoring trust and confidence in American institutions. Such trust has been steadily eroding since the 1970s, and reversing it will be essential to renewing American democracy and resisting the slide toward authoritarianism that imperils so many democracies around the world today.

In this deeply divided age, we make this endorsement with humility, recognizing that hyperpolarization has made landslide victories, like those of Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson and Ronald Reagan, all but unthinkable.

Trump has fanned racial tensions, told an endless stream of lies, run a campaign based on grievance and resentment, and cast himself as a defender of white Christian America. Many of those who support him inhabit an information silo consisting of Fox News and far-right talk radio and manipulated by social-media algorithms.

Others may simply be eager to lower taxes and cut regulations. Perhaps they fear American decline; feel that society is changing too rapidly; believe that the establishment has been too accommodating toward China; or work in an industry Trump has favored, such as energy exploration. They may be afraid that the markets will begin another downturn, or that pre-COVID levels of employment will not come back. Biden will need to reach across the aisle — especially in hotly contested debates regarding the climate, trade and immigration — if he is to move the country forward.

We are confident he can do so. To the surprise of supporters and detractors alike, Biden, a 77-year-old centrist, first elected to federal office 48 years ago, has mounted a disciplined campaign. He is poised not only to wrest the White House from an unfit incumbent but also to take the nation in a progressive direction. We enthusiastically endorse his election.

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