

MASK WEARERS

From Elizabeth Clark, Chair, Human Rights & Democracy Task Force

Trump not only doesn't care about Americans dying from COVID, he doesn't care that he is pulling the trigger on them. In his November 17 talk on the economy, President-elect Biden used the word "die" in saying that Americans would die as a consequence of Trump's refusal to work with the Biden transition team on urgent measures to fight COVID.

However strange it is to say, it is important that we hear the word "die." Refusal to wear a mask means that you have decided you are willing to risk killing another human being. The anti-mask fanaticism the pro-Trumpers exhibit is always justified by using the word "liberty." We have a right to our personal liberty so you can't tell us to wear a mask.

Of course pro-Trumpers are also fanatics on gun rights, evoking the US Constitution's second Amendment, which gives them the right to carry arms as part of their personal freedom. They have not gone so far as to say that it's a part of their personal right to liberty to use guns to kill somebody.

That is what we should be charging the anti-maskers with, however—that they are the demanding the right to kill someone. This is not as direct as shooting someone. The act is obscured by the fact that if it's their virus that infects somebody because they didn't wear a mask it's going to take a week or so for that person to get the virus and longer for that particular person to end up dying as a recipient of your particular breath.

But that is what it is: someone is dying from your breath, which you have allowed by refusing to wear a mask.

Taking an action that knowingly endangers another life should be against the law. We can levy fines for disobeying mask mandates. That is a pale definition of culpability for the horrifying reality of the hundreds of thousands of dead Americans.



COVID-19 PANDEMIC: WE MUST PASS THE CARES BILL AND WE MUST VACCINATE

***From Karen Pataky, Chair, Public Policy & Political Action
Committee, and Chair, Health Policy Task Force***

"Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Decides, Who Pays"

On December 15, the bells at the National Cathedral tolled 300 times, once for each 100 Americans who have died from COVID-19. On the same day, the first COVID ICU nurses received their initial COVID vaccine injections.

There was gossip that the first COVID vaccine shots would be administered to White House staff. This was believable because of the special medical therapies made available to Trump, Mayor Giuliani, and Dr. Ben Carson via special demand by Trump. Fortunately, the initial vaccine doses were given to “front-line” medical personnel, who are indeed the most deserving.

The next group of those who are “deserving” are the “essential” and vulnerable workers, which include our Black community. And, as we know, Black fellow Americans become sick and die in greater numbers proportionate to their population. Black Americans constitute 18.7% of deaths though 12% of the population. Black Americans tend to occupy the more vulnerable and low-wage jobs, while many more white Americans can work from home, and they receive better salaries. So, the most vulnerable among us sicken and die in greater numbers. They deserve to be at the front of the line for vaccines and they deserve passage of the second relief act ASAP.

Tragically, America’s historic medical treatment of Black citizens has been shameful, the worst of which was the Tuskegee experiment. In the 1930s the US Public Health Service decided to watch the progression of syphilis in southern Black male farmers, rather than to treat them with antibiotics. Neither the men, nor their families, were informed of their diagnoses over the ensuing 30 years. Horrific brain and spinal cord damage occurred in hundreds of Black American citizens *all of which was entirely preventable*.

So, our government has much work to do to reassure our Black neighbors that these new vaccines are both effective and safe. It will not be easy. Especially with an underlying, active “anti-vaxxer” movement for traditional and well-established vaccines.



GVP TASK FORCE REPORT

From Ellen McGovern, Chair, Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

Looking Forward to the Biden/Harris Administration

WNDC, along with countless other GVP groups, are excited about the new day in Washington, DC, with the Biden and Harris leadership at the helm. A national leadership, at last, with a shared vision—our values and our aspirations for the future! For the first time ever, we see the possibility for gun violence prevention as a national priority! We see these new leaders addressing gun violence as a public health crisis. Further, we recognize the opportunity to have a federal system conducting oversight of the gun industry. As you recall, WNDC and 86 GVP groups sent the new administration some 60 recommendations of executive actions that could be used to confront this public health epidemic. Thus, we are eager to partner with them soon after the inauguration on January 20, 2021.

Elections, Elections—Runoff in Georgia

Georgia, Georgia—on everyone's mind going into 2021! Soon after the January 5 runoff election, we should know if the Democrats took back the US Senate. If yes, then we will be on course to pass a robust legislative program in the US Congress, re-introducing and introducing legislation to make America a safer place for our families and youth. The first piece of legislation, no doubt, will be strengthening the background checks system (more than 97% of Americans support expanded background checks), followed by measures to end police violence. Unfortunately, the trauma of COVID-19 has not stopped gun violence nor gun purchases. As the Brady group points out, every day, 21 children and teens are killed or injured with firearms in the US. Moreover, each year, 637 young people take their own lives with a gun. Everytown for Gun Safety underscored this surge in gun sales, and the demand for ghost guns (unregulated do-it-yourself firearms) in 2020, bypassing background checks and serial numbers for tracing.

REGIONAL UPDATE—2021 PROJECTIONS**Virginia**

VA will be implementing several pieces of legislation passed by its 2020 special legislative session, including necessary improvements to policing and criminal justice. VA is now a national leader, joining two other states, in passing a no-knock warrants bill—Breonna's Law, in honor of the Kentucky woman police officers killed. VA WNDG members, please monitor these critical reform actions and support your state legislators and Governor Northam.

January 13, 2021 brings another VA General Assembly and more elections for the governorship and state senators. Stay tuned to all of these legislative and political actions going forward!

Maryland

WNDG MD members: follow the 2020, Bipartisan Panel of Maryland lawmakers' recommendations for first-time policing policy legislation. The 2021 MD General Assembly session begins January 13. See what happens. Make your voices heard!

District of Columbia

DC Moms Demand Action indicated that they are working in coalition with other grassroots organizations, advocating for funding for gun violence prevention programs and or the city to have a comprehensive, coordinated "vision zero" for gun violence prevention. They are also monitoring the new GVP Director role. This position in the City Administrator's office should be filled soon. DC Members: Watch these upcoming GVP changes in DC and support the Mayor and City Council members.

GVP TASK FORCE MEETING: January 28, Thursday, at 5:00 pm.

We welcome New members anytime!

THE YEAR OF HORRORS AND HEROES

From Elizabeth Clark, Chair, Human Rights & Democracy Task Force

We are looking back at the worst pandemic in American history and a terrible toll of deaths as a result of this COVID-19 pandemic. And we are looking back at the worst American President in our history who daily reaches new lows of egotism, greed, and delusion. Trump doesn't know the difference between fact and non-fact. As he said in a statement on November 29, as all of his cases asserting a fraudulent election against him were thrown out of courts, and as President-elect Biden started getting security briefings, that "his mind is not going to change." Nothing will be persuasive—he is not just going with ego or going with self-interest. For Trump, thinking something is a fact means it is a fact.

He will not pull back from his claim that the election was rigged and therefore his core supporters will not pull back on that claim either, even though they will not have been able to cite any facts in support of a rigged election. The endgame for Trumpists will be a political culture that sees Democracy and his core institution of the vote either as whatever the leader says, or through the lens of radical individualism—that voting should be just as much a matter of private liberty as everything else and have no more value than anything else, or the vote as part of religious authoritarianism where the world is dictated by religion and religious authorities. There will be no more acceptance of the separation of church and state and the religious authoritarianism will be the only justification for the state aside from the military. All social safety net institutions, such as medical care, will be defined as illegitimate. Trump wanted to be a dictator and have all the power he could desire at his disposal and, in the end, he used all he got for actively facilitating the deaths of Americans.

But rising way above these horrors are the heroes who work on the frontlines of the pandemic and also the heroes who are guarding and saving our democracy, especially the key institution of democracy, the vote. When Donald Trump tried to overthrow the results of the election, in what could only be called an attempted coup, a critical mass of civil servants and elected officials said, "No." Video footage of school auditoriums and other large spaces with individuals—us—sitting at small tables, eyes fixed on their boxes of ballots, were unforgettable. Also unforgettable was the fact that their leaders, Democrat or Republican stood by their work, counting the ballots, and declaring who won the count. How incredibly thrilling was the integrity of the process in state after state.

However scary and horrifying the actions of those who don't want our democracy—maybe at all. We did win. So, let us celebrate our heroes.



1526 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036 | (202) 232-7363

www.democraticwoman.org