

THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION AGENDA

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

As we move into the Biden Administration, what do we do about facts like the following?

- Marriott laid off tens of thousands of workers, but at the same time awarded \$160 million in shareholder dividends.
- CEO payments reflect economic inequality. Dick's Sporting Goods CEO Edward Stack earns 1,487 times the pay of a median employee (*New York Times* October 9, 2020).
- According to the Census Bureau, the gap between the wealthiest and poorest Americans is the highest it has been in 50 years.
- According to a Washington Post report on January 1, from March to December 2020, 56 new billionaires were made.
- According to a recent NY University study on stock holding, the wealthiest 10% of Americans control about 84% of the total value of stock market shares.

Meanwhile, former President Trump's 2020 budget slashed Medicaid, student loans, food stamps and \$2 trillion in safety-net programs (*New York Times* February 11, 2020).

SUPPORT PRESIDENT BIDEN'S AGENDA! A TOP PRIORITY OF THE PRESIDENT IS TO ENACT A \$15 AN HOUR MINIMUM WAGE. SUPPORT A GOVERNMENT THAT FIGHTS INEQUALITY AND WORKS FOR US ALL!



NEW CONGRESS – DEMOCRATIC SENATE LEADERSHIP

From Ellen McGovern, Chair, Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

For the first time ever, we see the possibility for “gun violence prevention” as a national priority! And, we see this new Administration addressing gun violence as a public health crisis. The GVP community anticipates that the Background Checks Act (HR 8) will be reintroduced in the early days of the new Congress, requiring background checks on all gun sales, which 93% of American voters support; then, passing an Extreme Risk (or “red flag”) law, which 87% of American voters support. This could be followed by reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), disarming domestic abusers of their guns. With Democratic majority leadership in the Senate, we see passage this year of one or more bills!

DMV—HOW SAFE IS YOUR STATE?

On Giffords' 2019 scorecard on gun safety, MD, VA, and DC are not rated but have strong gun laws as do CA, TX, OH, NJ, FL, and others. MD rated A-; VA rated D (no doubt, after a strong VA 2020 legislative “special session” with numerous GVP bills passed, their rating will rise). DMV states are key, but so are their neighbor states. See below or visit giffords.org/lawcenter/resources/scorecard.

50-STATE RANKINGS

From giffords.org/lawcenter/resources/scorecard

GUN LAW STRENGTH (RANKED)	STATE	2019 GRADE	GUN DEATH RATE (RANKED)	GUN DEATH RATE (PER 100K)
38	Alabama	F	2	21.70
42	Alaska	F	7	20.74
45	Arizona	F	18	15.29
40	Arkansas	F	8	18.96
1	California	A	44	7.45
14	Colorado	C+	19	15.14
3	Connecticut	A-	45	4.91
11	Delaware	B	34	11.55
22	Florida	C-	27	12.81
32	Georgia	F	17	15.72
5	Hawaii	A-	48	4.03
48	Idaho	F	16	16.61
8	Illinois	A-	36	10.78
28	Indiana	D-	20	14.71
19	Iowa	C	42	8.62
43	Kansas	F	21	14.65
46	Kentucky	F	14	16.81
32	Louisiana	F	4	21.31
34	Maine	F	39	10.32
6	Maryland	A-	33	11.61
7	Massachusetts	A-	49	3.46
19	Michigan	C	26	12.82
13	Minnesota	C+	43	7.79
50	Mississippi	F	1	22.81
46	Missouri	F	3	21.34

34	Montana	F	13	17.27
18	Nebraska	C	41	9.05
15	Nevada	C+	10	17.84
30	New Hampshire	F	37	10.66
2	New Jersey	A	46	4.75
17	New Mexico	C	6	20.75
4	New York	A-	47	4.03
24	North Carolina	D	23	13.26
39	North Dakota	F	35	11.36
24	Ohio	D	25	13.05
40	Oklahoma	F	15	16.71
15	Oregon	C+	32	11.68
12	Pennsylvania	C+	29	12.47
9	Rhode Island	B+	50	3.28
31	South Carolina	F	12	17.51
44	South Dakota	F	22	13.50
29	Tennessee	D-	11	17.82
34	Texas	F	30	12.22
27	Utah	D	24	13.14
23	Vermont	C-	28	12.63
26	Virginia	D	31	11.76
10	Washington	B+	38	10.32
34	West Virginia	F	9	18.11
21	Wisconsin	C-	40	10.13
48	Wyoming	F	5	21.09

REGIONAL UPDATE & 2021 PROJECTIONS

VIRGINIA

2021 brings another VA General Assembly, which opened January 13. This will be a short session. Elections for the Governorship and State senators follow.

During this session, several GVP groups like Giffords, Brady, The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, and Everytown, are urging the VA legislators to call on the General Assembly to ban open gun carry. We agree with these organizations, following the mass, armed demonstration in Richmond last winter and the assault on the U.S. Capitol this January, that armed intimidation poses a threat to both public safety and a functioning government in the Commonwealth. VA Moms' top priorities are--prohibiting guns at polling stations and in state buildings and at the Capitol Square; and banning ghost guns (homemade guns). Virginia WNDC members--monitor the "critical reform actions" of 2020 and support your State legislators in passing this open gun carry prohibition.

MARYLAND

The 2021 MD General Assembly session also opened January 13. Its bipartisan panel of lawmakers' recommendations for policing-policy legislation will be taken up for the first time. WNDC Maryland members, follow these actions. Make your voices heard!

During the first few days of the General Assembly, MD legislators voted to overturn Governor Hogan's veto of funding for community violence prevention programs. Their vote was victorious! Giffords' 2019 Scorecard rates Maryland an A-. However, Maryland has the nation's highest rate of crime gun imports, with traffickers bringing in nearly three times as many guns to Maryland as the average state. Maryland sits on a route used to traffic firearms from southern states with weak gun laws to northeastern states with stronger laws. Giffords reports that nearly a third of crime guns identified in Maryland were sold originally in Virginia. Guns from Georgia and Florida are also big contributors to violence in the state.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DC Moms Demand Action continues to work in coalition with other grassroots organizations, advocating for funds for gun violence prevention programs, and for the city to have a comprehensive and coordinated vision for such programs. The Moms 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 and support the Mayor and City Council members where possible.

Feb. 1-7, 2021 is National Gun Violence Survivors Week!

DC Moms Demand Action will sponsor a panel discussion at 8:00 pm. on February 4: bit.ly/DC-SurvivorPanel

GVP TASK FORCE MEETING: Thursday, Feb. 25, at 5:00 pm.

We welcome new task force members any time!

ATTACKING COVID-19 IS JOB#1 FOR THE BIDEN/HARRIS TEAM
From Karen Pataky, Chair, Public Policy & Political Action
Committee, and Chair, Health Policy Task Force

More than 400,000 Americans have died from COVID-19 since the CDC diagnosed the first American case on January 21, 2020. The medical community knew then that this was to be an international disaster of historic proportions. Trump not only ignored the warning, but actively disparaged its importance. There was never a word of sorrow or condolence from him for any of those deaths.

The inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris immediately addressed our national tragedy with a heart-stopping memorial service with 400 lights that shone around the ellipse at sunset. The 400,000 lost souls and their families were finally acknowledged.

Our new administration begins with virtually no structure. Yes, two vaccines are ready, but the task of immunizing everyone is monstrous. President Biden began immediately, beginning with unleashing our key authority on COVID-19, to speak truth to all Americans about fighting COVID.

Social distancing and mask mandates are in place. The Defense Production Act is being mobilized to provide vaccines, syringes, alcohol swabs, PPE, and persons competent to administer the vaccines we have. More vaccines are expected soon, and additional treatments are in process.

We will be discussing the roadblocks and remedies in coming months. We have faced down the Great Depression and Hitler's fascism, and we now have a plan to defeat COVID-19, and an administration dedicated to doing everything possible to succeed.



FORWARD IN UNITY

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

The press has reported that our new president, Joe Biden, used the word "unity" 11 times in his inaugural address. Unity in the address was linked with America as a community "moving forward" to accomplish tasks that benefit all. Unity is also linked with the motivation of love. The Reverend Silvester Beaman, who gave the inaugural benediction, probably phrased Biden's meaning of Unity best when he talked about our common humanity.

"Common humanity" is different from unity that is conceived as the sum of many parts. That conception has been the easiest way to visualize what the President is thinking, i.e., the wonderful diversity of his cabinet and his administration. Individuals are never named in commentary without this point being made. It is not just the new Vice President, with her East Asian and Jamaican heritage that is definitional, we now have journalists lead their introduction of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor with her Latina ethnicity. Respect for diversity cannot be celebrated enough, but adding all the parts together is not the same as is our "common humanity" as Americans. Unity is not addition.

The press is also comfortable with picking up the theme of unity as the theme of bipartisanship. But that is even less a big picture idea of unity than is a collection of ethnicities. Bipartisanship doesn't even really imply unity, but rather negotiations between separate groups who are willing to reach a bargain but will not think that that implies they are part of a unity. We should hold separate our ethnic and political identities when they are based on principled foundations and work with others to forward them. However, we are more than separate knobs to be turned. The new president is the right man to make us, as citizens, understand that the feeling of common humanity is real and important.

WHAT ARE THE DEFENSE CHALLENGES WE FACE AS A NATION? *From Jane Elkin, Chair, Foreign Policy Task Force*

It is important to recognize that the gaps between the United States and potential adversaries, including China or Russia, have shortened over the last 10 to 20 years. China, Russia, and the United States all have exceptionally powerful militaries. China and the United States also have strong economies.

The internet, our command and control systems, GPS systems, cyber systems, and the electronic warfare environment on the tactical battlefield, which depend on satellites and fiber optic cable, are all vulnerable. We have to get comfortable with operating without perfect command and control systems and degraded GPS systems. The next Pearl Harbor could happen in space.

We must deter potential opponents from even thinking or contemplating that they could have a war with the United States or that they could be successful in a war with the United States. It is important to maintain considerable levels of military power, economic power, and diplomatic engagement. These three things can ensure that the opponent knows that we are a powerful nation. It is a cost-benefit analysis that it's not going to make any sense to have a war with the United States. Our opponent needs to know our capability. It doesn't do any good if our opponents have no clue what our capabilities are.

Another key component is will. Our opponent needs to know that we have the will to use the capabilities that we have. We do that by communication, as well as with our behavior. It's important to maintain communications with enemies and adversaries. We communicate through classified back channels with our opponents to clearly and unambiguously let them know that if action A were to occur then reaction B would result.

Today, precision munitions are almost ubiquitous. Most of the significant world powers have such weapons, which can hit long-range targets with great precision. In the future, there may be entire robotically controlled tank units without crews, or entire squadrons of airplanes without pilots, or ships without sailors. We've learned about the potential of biological weapons by watching this pandemic. This was a naturally occurring outbreak but it could foreshadow things that could be done deliberately by other powers. We need to stockpile PPE. There's no such thing as a limited nuclear war. If any leader decides to cross a nuclear threshold, that is an extraordinarily dangerous moment in international politics.

Addendum: Right now the largest direct threats to our national security are white supremacist terrorists. Excerpted from a December 2, 2020 webinar presented at the Brookings Institute, Washington, DC, by General Mark A. Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

