

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

GOP Gov. Ridge endorses Biden

Tom Ridge is a former Republican governor of Pennsylvania and the first U.S. secretary of Homeland Security.

I will cast my vote for Joe Biden on Nov. 3. It will be my first vote for a Democratic candidate for president of the United States. But it is not the first time I have said “no” to Donald Trump. I urge my fellow Pennsylvanians to join me.

I actually consider it a point of personal pride that I’m recognized for being among the first Republicans to reject Donald Trump. It was way back in December 2015. I told NBC’s Chuck Todd that day that I could never support Trump. I said then that he was an embarrassment to the Republican Party and our country. I said he belittles, demeans, and ridicules people who disagree with him, and that I’ve never thought that loud, obnoxious, and simpleminded solutions to complex problems are the kind of qualities we want in a president. I believe that earned me my first of several Trump tweets of indignation.

So here we are in 2020. And do we ever have complex problems that demand thoughtful, intelligent leadership. We are getting none of it.

Imagine the impact of President Trump traveling to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention back in February, and talking plainly about the challenge Mother Nature intended to throw at us, and how this country, working together, public and private sector, would confront it with all the fortitude and resources we could bring to bear.

Then imagine him meeting with journalists the next day, appearing with a face mask, and calmly walking through the steps that his fellow citizens could and should take to do their part to combat this new challenge. Imagine the difference in attitude and outcomes.

Donald Trump has proven over these last four years he is incapable of such leadership. It is not within him. He lacks the empathy, integrity, intellect and maturity to lead. He sows division along political, racial and religious lines. And he routinely dismisses the opinions of experts who know far more about the subject

at hand than he does – intelligence, military, and public health. Our country has paid dearly in lives lost, social unrest, economic hardship and our standing in the world.

With just about one month until Election Day, President Trump continues to claim the only way he can possibly be defeated is a rigged election.

Can you imagine the hubris? Can you imagine any other president in our lifetime — or ever — saying something so dangerous and un-American? We are in the midst of a health crisis, when we should be doing all we can to help citizens vote safely, yet he continues to cast doubt on the sanctity of the vote.

He’s done so multiple times here in Pennsylvania. It’s deplorable, yet utterly consistent with past reprehensible behavior.

Vice President Biden and I both know that my supporting his candidacy now certainly won’t dissuade me from speaking out later when I disagree with him. But we surely will do so with civility and respect, not with childish name-calling and twitter tirades. Joe Biden has the experience and empathy necessary to help us navigate not only the pandemic, but also other issues that have fractured our nation, including social injustice, income inequality and immigration reform.

Whether the Republican Party can restore itself or not, I don’t know. Whether it wants to or not, I don’t know that either. But what matters to me is that the core group of conservative principles I held as a young man when I cast my first vote decades ago are with me today. Those principles have been indispensable to me in deciding to extend my hand of support to Joe Biden.

Pennsylvania voters, along with voters in Michigan, Wisconsin and Florida, are likely to ultimately determine the next president. So much is at stake. For me, voting is not just a privilege, but a responsibility. And this year, I believe the responsible vote is for Joe Biden. It’s a vote for decency. A vote for the rule of law. And a vote for honest and earnest leadership. It’s time to put country over party. It’s time to dismiss Donald Trump.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



FORMER GOV. TOM RIDGE