

Loving Room Talk #6: Biden Wins; Now What?

It seems now that Joe Biden will be the next President of United States.

But the road between now and Inauguration Day on January 20 is going to be rocky and that's what I want to talk to you about tonight

My name is John Graham and in past sessions I've told you more about me than you probably want to know.

If you're new here, I'll just tell you that I'm a lifelong adventurer, a former Foreign Service Officer, a writer, a speaker, a social and political activist, and for over three decades a leader of the Giraffe Heroes Project, a global nonprofit that moves people to stick their necks out for the common good. More at johngraham.org. There's a memoir, *Sit Down Young Stranger*, on Amazon.

Now to the election:

The Electoral College will meet on December 14 to formally elect the next President, by custom tracking the vote in the 50 states. Before that happens there will be recounts in key states where the vote was close.

Recounts are a perfectly legitimate part of the American electoral process. But the historical record shows that no recount effort has a chance unless the original separation between winner and loser is very small—no more than a couple hundred votes statewide. But the smallest margin of victory for Biden in 2020 looks to be about 4,000 in Georgia.

The last recount in a presidential election was the recount demanded in Wisconsin in 2016, hoping to overturn Trump's victorious margin of 20,000 votes over Hilary Clinton. But that recount adjusted the totals only be 137 votes (ironically in Trump's favor).

And since it looks like Biden could win by as many as 36 electoral votes in 2020, recounts would have to succeed for Trump in more than one state.

So don't lose sleep over recounts.

There are other legal challenges possible depending upon the ingenuity of the Trump legal team to try to prove the "fraud and deception" that President Trump declares is happening.

If you've been watching any of the electoral coverage, you may have seen extensive interviews with election officials, in both red states and blue, pointing out how scrupulously complete, honest and open their election processes are. Observers from both political parties have full access to the whole process. Cameras watch over the counting rooms and anyone can see the

process online. All of it makes any legal challenges to the counting very unlikely to gain any traction in the courts.

Well what about the Supreme Court, you say? Look what they did in Bush v Gore in 2000. And Donald Trump has already said he intends to carry cases he may have to the Supreme Court.

Again, good luck on that one. The Supreme Court intervened in 2000 because of a counting process in Florida that was incompetent and riddled with defects (remember the hanging chads). Florida (and other states) have long since gotten rid of unreliable punch card machines and installed appropriate safeguards so challenges of incompetent counting in 2020 are much less likely to even get a formal look from the High Court.

The most serious impediment to a peaceful transition in 2020 is Donald Trump himself. He has for weeks declared with no evidence that the electoral process was corrupt and that dark forces would be trying to steal the election from him.

All this in preparation for a stream of Tweets and two addresses from the White House over the last three days, remarkable even for Donald Trump in the outrageousness of their lies, they're whining attacks on his opponents and their outright embrace of loony conspiracy theories discredited even by his own political allies.

In his addresses, Trump lied about the vote-counting, conjuring up a conspiracy of "legal" and "illegal" ballots being tabulated and claiming without evidence that states were trying to deny him re-election.

"They're trying to steal an election, they're trying to rig an election," the president said from the White House briefing room. He also baselessly suggested nefarious behavior in Philadelphia and Detroit, cities that he called "two of the most corrupt political places."

The worst thing about Trump's tirades is that they were attacks, not just on his opponents, but on the concept of voting, the pillar of democracy itself. Speaking as the fascist dictator he always wished he could be, Trump demanded that the vote-counting stop on Election Night, when he had a comfortable lead, a move that would have disenfranchised tens of millions of voters, by far the majority of whom were Biden supporters, who had cast their legal ballots by mail, many to avoid pandemic contamination in crowded voting lines.

Trumped had urge his own followers to vote in person on Election Day, and that's what most of them did. Since mail-in ballots were counted after ballots cast in person, it was inevitable that Trump would run up a big lead on Election night, and that Biden votes from mail-in ballots would steadily cut into that lead over the next days as mail-in ballots were slowly and methodically counted.

The biggest danger in Trump's tirades is that at least 30 million Americans believe every word he says and so a great many Americans tonight really do feel that dark political forces have stolen a victory that was rightfully theirs. And some of these people have already begun staging demonstrations—so far nonviolent but that could quickly change as Trump eggs them on.

You and I need to stay informed, stay calm and stay patient.

Trump's legal team will throw one Hail Mary pass after the other and they will all fail because, by all accounts, in both red states and blue, the the process of vote counting has been scrupulously professional, honest and transparent.

On December 14 the Electoral College *will* confirm Joe Biden as President of the United States and on January 20 he *will* be sworn in as president of a country even more polarized than it already is by the unprincipled fascist still in the White House.

If this were a normal time we could expect a peaceful and even cooperative transition between outgoing and incoming administrations and I still expect that to happen at the positions below the cabinet level .

But I also expect at least some of the ideological lackeys in Trump's cabinet to try to make the job of their successors as difficult as possible with last-minute rulings.

And of course, Trump himself it is almost sure to be uncooperative. There will be a surge of Executive Orders that will have to be reversed.

I expect an endless stream of more wild tweets, dire warnings and false accusations which will keep the pot of rage boiling among his faithful so there will be more civil unrest as Trump's base rails against the "socialist criminals" intent on ruining the country for "real Americans."

And if Trump is reluctant to leave , the Biden campaign barked this morning, "If Trump does not concede, the U.S. government is 'perfectly capable of escorting trespassers out of the White House.'" Good for them.

This unrest won't overturn anything, but it will certainly continue to unsettle an already badly unsettled country and make Biden's pledge to re-unite us all that more difficult to achieve.

So keep the faith. Prepare for these conditions and don't over-react to them. The nightmare will soon be over.

Perhaps we can even hope that Mr. Trump will lose interest or realize that he'd better start preparing his legal defenses for the charges (ranging from rape to tax evasion) that will be leveled at him once he no longer has the legal protections of the Presidency.

And for his next star turn—I doubt that he has the patience and skill to organize a significant political movement let alone a new political party. But Rush Limbaugh, now dying of cancer, will need a replacement. Well, why not?

And as for Joe Biden, well the man certainly has a lot to do. As I noted last week, he'll need to

One Day One, put in place A new science-based national plan to combat COVID-19 ;

Overtake Trump executive orders that now are destroying the environment and undercutting regulations that protect our safety and health.

Replace the collection of corrupt toadies that now hold top jobs in the Trump Administration with competent professionals devoted to the missions of their agencies.

Take seriously the task of finally dealing in depth with racism and inequality in this country, and knitting back together a country so badly polarized over the last four years.

Announce a new foreign policy that will renew America's commitment to a leadership role in a multipolar world, including immediately rejoining the Paris climate accord.

And perhaps most importantly, restore a basic sense of decency, honesty, compassion, honor and competency to the leadership of this great country.

A huge and inspiring agenda.

God bless America