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Post-election claims of fraud and irregularities taking country on a rough & bumpy ride

By Steve Horton

“When I die, I want to go peacefully, in my sleep, like my Grandfather did. Not yelling and screaming, like the passengers in his car as it went over a cliff.”

While the analogy might not be precise, I thought of this bit of dark humor—attributed in part to Will Rogers—as I’ve read the avalanche of post-election claims of fraud and irregularities coming from President Trump and his campaign operatives, joined by many elected Republican officials and the party faithful, along with the slew of lawsuits filed in battleground states—all of which seems designed to either overturn President-elect Biden’s victory by taking away votes or muddy the waters enough to have the outcome decided by the U.S. Supreme Court with its conservative majority.

There have even been calls for the Republican legislatures in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin—states that Biden won—to ignore the people’s will and cast their state’s electoral votes on Trump’s behalf.

Along with all of this, concerns have been expressed that the President might, if all else fails, call on the military, FBI, or other law-enforcement agencies to intervene. A not unfounded worry given the firing of Secretary of Defense Mark Esper two days after the election (apparently for not being a team player) and then Attorney General William Barr’s decision to circumvent the firewalls in place by telling federal prosecutors they can investigate alleged “election fraud” prior to a finalization of the vote count rather than afterwards.

Here in Michigan, only a few days after the election, Republican leaders of the Legislature called a rare weekend meeting and used—to quote a news article— “unprecedented subpoena power to demand expansive records from the state’s Nov. 3 election.”

The report explained that the GOP’s legislative subpoenas and investigation into the state’s election process is seeking state records on absentee applications, postcards, and voter-registration encouragement letters sent to Michiganders by Democratic Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, who spent months encouraging mail-in voting amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

If nothing else, the action suggests there might be problems, even if none exist, giving credence to the notion that Biden did not really receive the majority of the state's votes.

I have no wish to be overwrought, preferring at this point to pin my hopes on the strength of our judicial and governmental institutions, the integrity of most public officials to do what's right, and a belief that a majority of Americans on both sides of the political fence will stand by our self-governing traditions.

I take encouragement from the legal experts who say the lawsuits have little chance of success, prominent Republicans like former President George W. Bush and Maine Senator Susan Collins who have called to congratulate Biden on his win, and election officials in battleground states—both Republican and Democrat—who are 'sticking to their guns' in saying that voting in their respective jurisdictions was fair, transparent, and accurate.

Still, it's not clear whether our democracy—the hallmark of which is accepting the outcome of the ballot box, followed by the peaceful and orderly transfer of power—can withstand the onslaught and remain viable.

At the moment we seem to be on a rough and bumpy ride, not sure if we'll steer clear of a perilous outcome, or may be heading over a cliff like Grandfather's passengers.

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