

Political Grab Bag

By Steve Bagby, Sr., Political Action Committee Chair

I am encouraging everyone who took the Pfizer vaccination and who is eligible to do so, to get their booster shot! (Those eligible are people age 65 and older, as well as people 18 to 64 with underlying health conditions or who work or live in settings that increase their risk of developing severe Covid and who have completed their initial series at least six months ago.) If there are some of you who have not received the initial Covid-19 vaccination, I am also encouraging you to get it now. You may be wondering why this health issue is being referenced in the Political Grab Bag article? Well, simply stated, we need to be healthy in order to continue doing the work of our forefathers, as well as the work of our recent past and current leaders as it relates to our fight for equal rights, voting rights, civil rights, social justice and basic humanity (eg. Haitian immigrants) . . . so we can continue to have a voice and be heard on the issues that remain so relevant to us today.

Yes, we must continue to let our voices be heard as others, the Republicans, continue to create false scenarios about many things, including the outcome of the 2020 Presidential Election. They have continued to allege that widespread fraud cost Trump the election as they seek audits/reviews of the voting processes in **Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin** and now **Texas**. However, **the allegations of fraud have been unsupported** . . . as evidenced by the results of the audits/reviews that have been concluded. On September 27, 2021, the *L.A. Times* reported that as recently as Friday, September 24th, “[t]he audit in **Arizona’s Maricopa County**, pushed by Republicans in the state Senate [and financed with \$5.7 million by prominent Trump supporters], ended Friday with a whimper. The six-month process concluded with a report that presented **no evidence to support Trump’s claim of a stolen election and ended up validating Biden’s win in the state’s most populous county.**” Also, in **Michigan**, “a [Republican]-led Senate Committee held hearings on allegations, reviewed thousands of pages of subpoenaed documents and produced a report that **found no evidence of widespread or systematic fraud.**” The Committee further stated that “[o]ur clear finding is that citizens should be confident the results represent the true results of the ballots cast by

the people of Michigan” and further stated that “[t]he Committee strongly recommends citizens use a critical eye and ear toward those who have pushed demonstrably false theories for their own personal gain.” (*L.A. Times* 9/27/21)

Notwithstanding these audits and reviews which have upheld the integrity of the elections in question, as well as all of the lawsuits that were brought in 2020 which **unsuccessfully** challenged various state election results, Trump and his fellow Republican supporters, **without evidence**, continue to press the claim that the election was tainted with fraud. **WHY? Because he is “playing to his base” to keep them “stirred up” to “fan the flame” during this time with the ultimate goal of confusing the public to think the Democrats have done something illegal in the 2020 election so the Republicans can win more seats in the House of Representatives (House) and Senate in the mid-term elections in order to take back the majority in both chambers and thwart the Democrat’s agenda.** Thus, just as Trump and his supporters continue to advance these fraudulent claims, **we must make every effort to let our voices be heard to counter their efforts by supporting the Justice Department and various leaders like Georgia Democrat Stacey Abrams and “others” who are working tirelessly to counter Trump’s allegations and challenge those restrictive voting rights laws recently enacted by various states after the 2020 election.**

As we focus on the “others” who are working to protect our voting rights, per the September 2, 2021, *Reuters Report*, “former first lady **Michelle Obama** and the **Poor People's Campaign** will receive the **Freedom Award from the National Civil Rights Museum** in Tennessee for their heroic work to protect voting rights.” The award, which recognizes “significant contributions to civil and human rights,” will be presented in a virtual ceremony on October 14th to Michelle Obama as well as to Reverend Dr. William J. Barber, II and Reverend Dr. Liz Theoharis, who are co-chairs of the **Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival.**

As an example of the advocacy on this issue, **Michelle Obama and Stacey Abrams came together to prepare a video released on Thursday, August 5th, to urge Americans to register to vote and for a call to action against new election regulations across the country. Both women worked to turn out voters in last year’s elections — Stacey Abrams, through “Fair Fight Action,” which she founded in 2018 after a close contest for governor of Georgia and Michelle Obama, through “When We All Vote,” which she launched in 2018 to educate**

and mobilize voters of color, women and young people. The video is their first public joint venture. "I encourage every woman within earshot of my voice to think of ways that they can be involved," the former first lady said during an appearance on August 27th at "*The 19th's Virtual Summit.*" *The 19th* is an independent, nonprofit newsroom that focuses on reporting on gender, politics and policy. Mrs. Obama further stated that "at a time when lawmakers are trying to take away 'the very power that we have to use our voice . . . making it harder for us to vote, and doing the most undemocratic things you can imagine,' women must 'step up and make sure that our communities are protected.'" (*Tennessee Tribune 9/2/21*)

The Freedom Award will also go to the Poor People's Campaign, which works to fight systemic racism, poverty and ecological devastation. As it relates specifically to voting rights, their platform states:

"We demand the immediate full restoration and expansion of the Voting Rights Act, an end to racist gerrymandering and redistricting, early registration of 17 year olds, automatic voting registration at the age of 18, early voting in every state, same-day registration, the enactment of Election Day as a holiday and a verifiable paper record. We demand the right to vote for the currently and formerly incarcerated. We demand adequate funding for polling places to accommodate the full participation of the electorate." (poorpeoplescampaign.org/about/our-demands)

As set forth above, it is obvious that we have some strong, dynamic and tireless voting rights and civil rights advocates who are leading the way and calling upon us to assist them in their efforts. Thus, we must do everything within our power to stay healthy so we can do just that!!! Get your booster or your first or second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine now! Your assistance is needed!!!

LOS ANGELES MAYORAL RACE -

With Eric Garcetti being "termed out" as Mayor in December 2022 (unless his nomination as Ambassador to India is confirmed by the Senate and he leaves prior to that time), the field is wide open with prospective candidates to fill the position as L.A. Mayor. On September 27th, Congresswoman Karen Bass announced that she is running for Mayor. She has withdrawn from the 2022

Congressional House race, but will still serve in the capacity of Congresswoman for the district that comprises some parts of South L.A., Mid-City, Culver City and Palms until the mid-term elections take place in November 2022.

Congresswoman Bass has entered a crowded field that currently consists of City Attorney Mike Feuer, City Councilmen Kevin de Leon and Joe Buscaino, business leader Jessica Lall and real estate broker Mel Wilson, with two others who are considering a run for Mayor, developer Rick Caruso and former L.A.U.S.D. Superintendent, Austin Beutner. Although the field is crowded, Congresswoman Bass has substantial experience dealing with complex dynamics as she is a six-term Congresswoman who recently finished a stint as the head of the Congressional Black Caucus and who founded the Community Coalition in 1990, a South L.A. non-profit organization focused on social and economic issues to help the citizens of South L.A. tackle the cocaine drug infiltration issue at that time and which has recently provided “many of the volunteer boots on the ground helping to run vaccination sites and going door-to-door to persuade reluctant Angelenos to get the [vaccination].” (*L.A. Times 9/28/21*) Congresswoman Bass has stated that her platform will focus on homelessness. “Our city is facing a public health, safety and economic crisis in homelessness that has evolved into a humanitarian emergency. I’ve spent my entire life bringing groups of people together in coalitions to solve complex problems and produce concrete change—especially in times of crisis. With my whole heart, I’m ready. Let’s do this . . . together. I’m running for Mayor.” (*L.A. Times 9/28/21*) In her attempt to become the second Black person and the first woman to be elected Mayor of Los Angeles, she would certainly be a welcome addition to the local political landscape. We have a lot to be proud of in her choice to return to Los Angeles to run for Mayor. Let us do our part to stay healthy so that we can assist her in efforts to attain that goal!

CALIFORNIA WILL LOSE A CONGRESSIONAL SEAT (CENSUS DATA) -

Per the 9/27/21 and 9/29/21 articles in the *L.A. Times*, due to the sluggish population growth over the last decade (California grew below the national average at 6.1%, compared with 7.4 % nationwide), for the first time in its history, California is set to lose one of its 53 congressional seats, and the California Citizens Redistricting Commission, created by voters 13 years ago to end the practice of self-serving state legislators carving out their own districts, will have to draw new lines for congressional districts based on new census population totals. **This dynamic may be one of the factors, along with the restrictive voting laws**

that have been passed, that helps Republicans regain the House in the mid-term elections. The Redistricting Commission, composed of 14 members, five Democrats, five Republicans and four Independents has held public hearings and is in its final phase, which involves drafting maps, with certification of a final map required to be done by December 27, 2021. While the Commission requested an extension of time to prepare the final map due to it only recently receiving the final data from the Census Bureau because of counting delays caused by the pandemic, the state Supreme court rejected that request and imposed the December 27, 2021 deadline leaving the Commission a short turnaround time to prepare the final map. Even in light of the shortened timeline, “[t]he Commission’s No. 1 legal obligation is to divide the districts into equal population sizes [and] the No. 2 edict is to comply with the federal Voting Rights Act. [This] means that minority communities need to be taken into account so they have voting power and an equal opportunity to elect a representative of their choice.” (*L.A. Times 9/27/21*) All eyes will be on how the congressional districts are mapped, as while we know that California will already lose one seat in the House due to sluggish population growth, we don’t want to ultimately lose a seat to a Republican that is currently held by a Democrat due to the manner in which the maps are drawn.

Further, Karen Bass’ decision to run for Mayor and potential victory may cause another issue relating to the current Democratic majority in the House during what is called the “lame duck” session. “If [Congresswoman] Bass is elected Mayor in November 2022 and sworn in before the 118th Congress convenes in January 2023, Democrats may have to adjust to having one less vote during a portion of the few weeks between election day and a new Congress, which is known as the lame-duck period. That can be a busy time, particularly if a chamber is changing hands from one party to another. Democrats are already struggling to enact the President’s agenda with a relatively slim voting margin in the House, and an evenly divided Senate, so every vote counts.” (*L.A. Times 9/29/21*)

“That’s the question: How will that mess things up?” said Rep. Mark Takano (D-Riverside). “If we need her as a voting member in the lame-duck session, that might be a problem the last three weeks of December.” (*L.A. Times 9/29/21*) House vacancies in California are filled by special elections, so there would not be enough time to temporarily fill the seat. Congresswoman Bass’ replacement, presumably elected in November 2022, would take the seat in early January.

We know that there is a delicate balance that needs to be maintained as we Democrats need to do everything within our power to retain the majority of seats in the House and to keep, and even increase, our seats in the Senate. There is indeed work to be done!

Thank you for reading!

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