



## **Our Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor**

We have an energetic new Op-Ed Committee, headed by Maggie McCollum, with eight volunteers so far who are writing op-eds and letters to the editor. Even before the committee was formed, Patty Martin had written two letters to the editor, one to the Alpine Avalanche and one to the Big Bend Sentinel.

Subsequently, the committee sent out a letter to the editor from Robert Martin, *Partisanship and Democracy*, that was published by the Big Bend Sentinel. On July 8, 2024, we sent Beth Francell's letter to the editor, *On Immigration*, to three media outlets. On July 15, we sent Madge Lindsay's op-ed on Climate Change Within the Big Bend, to all three newspapers.

Other op-eds and letters to the editor are already scheduled -- on healthcare and reproductive rights, separation of church and state, the economy, and firearm violence.

Do you have a topic of special interest to you? Would you like to share your opinion with a wider audience, and possibly persuade a few people of your views? Then join our Op-Ed Committee. You can contact us by clicking on the *Message Us* button on our website home page or call our party office at (432) 426-0122.

[You can view our completed op-eds/letters to the editor below:](#)

## **“Strongman” Letter to the Editor L.P. Martin in the Big Bend Sentinel**

This year we have a presidential election as we are all aware. One presidential candidate in particular has been telling his audiences that he will “Be a dictator for one day.” And, he ends his speeches with the statement that he will be a “Strongman.” On its face value, being a strong leader sounds like a good thing, one who would not bend with the wind.

The term STRONGMAN is explained in Ruth Ben-Ghiat’s book, Strongmen, as a person who, as president, asserts executive power at the expense of the legislative and judicial branches of government. History gives us many examples of Strongmen, such as Hitler, Mussolini, Putin, Pinochet and Franco, who have destroyed democracies and become dictators.

In this election cycle it behooves each and every one of us, if we value the world we have grown up in, where we have the freedom to gather, the freedom to travel, the freedom to voice our opinion, the freedom to worship according to our own conscience, and education for all our children, then, we MUST vote to secure the continuation of this democracy we have inherited.

**L. P. Martin**  
**Fort Davis, TX**

## **"Christian America" Letter to the Editor L.P. Martin in the Alpine Avalanche**

The historian Kevin M. Kruse wrote *One Nation Under God* in 2015. Recently, I ran across a term new to me. "Christian America". It was coined in the 1930's when businessmen enlisted religious activists in their fight against FDR's New Deal.

Big corporations paid conservative clergy "to attack the New Deal as a program of 'pagan statism' that perverted the central principle of Christianity: the sanctity and salvation of the individual". They were able to get Dwight D. Eisenhower elected president in 1952. But President Eisenhower started a religious movement and religion moved in with government. The phrase "Under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" became our official motto.

Historically, we are a nation forged from the experiences of immigrants fleeing religious persecution. Immigrants were coming from countries with a State sanctioned religion. They simply wanted to worship according to their own beliefs since they were persecuted for it in their mother country. So, it's not surprising that as the Founding Fathers fashioned the rules for our nation, they separated church from state. That has worked in our favor throughout the course of our history. So, it defies reason to learn that there is a movement afoot to recreate our nation as a "Christian America" and ignore the rights of other religions.

**L. P. Martin**  
**Fort Davis**

## Partisanship and Democracy

A recent book, *Founding Partisans: Hamilton, Madison, Jefferson, Adams and the Brawling Birth of American Politics*, published in 2023 by U.T. history professor H. W. Brands, pointed out that extreme partisanship in U. S. politics has a 200+ year history. Although our first president George Washington thought that parties were unhealthy for our fledgling democracy, that was soon undercut by the developing factions of Hamilton-Adams, who favored a strong central government, and Jefferson-Madison, who favored state government and agriculture.

Those factions rose to extreme lengths during the presidential electoral-college contest between Adams, Burr, and Jefferson. Ultimately, Jefferson prevailed in the tied electoral college contest when the Federalist Hamilton belatedly decided to support Jefferson over Aaron Burr to win the presidency in 1801.

That election, when Adams declined to attend the inauguration of Jefferson, resulted in almost a lifetime of animosity between Jefferson and Adams who had been respected colleagues during the revolution and diplomats in Paris seeking a treaty between the U.S. and England to end the Revolutionary War. In the brief period prior to their same-day deaths on July 4, 1826, both Adams and Jefferson sought reconciliation with one another by exchanges of letters.

In the last few years, extreme partisanship appears to threaten the stability of our country with some partisans saying that democracy is not necessary for the proper functioning of our republic. It behooves all citizens of all parties to respect democracy by accepting the wishes of voters. Only then can the foresight of our founders, admittedly not initially respectful of all races and genders, ensure that the rights of lawful voters will prevail.

Robert Martin, Fort Davis  
Jeff Davis County Democrats

# On Immigration

Dear Friends and Registered Voters,

You may have been told that illegal immigrants are voting in our elections, receiving welfare, bringing in terrorists and fentanyl, raising crime rates, and taking your jobs. All lies. This is the same tactic Hitler used to demonize Jews as the reason for all the ills in Germany. Let's look at the facts.

Under Biden, unemployment has gone down to 3.7%. Good jobs are going begging because our native born do not want them. For 50 years no American has been killed or injured in a terrorist act by someone who crossed the border illegally. Fifty-six joint terrorist task forces identify and detain potential terrorist suspects whether or not they are on the watch list.

Most immigrants today are refugees from countries with violent gangs in control and no jobs to be had. Some have lost farms due to rising seas. They want a safe place for their families to live and to get jobs. The seven immigrant workers killed when the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed were working a night job our citizens did not want. For years, immigrants have filled hard dangerous jobs in agriculture that Americans did not want.

In fact, immigrants are also needed to fill essential jobs in construction, elder care and hospitality. Demographics show that without immigrants as Trump wants, our population would shrink because American families are having fewer children. Immigrants boost our economy by working and by spending.

In the past year, Republicans and Democrats together in Congress created a Border Security Bill with tough and fair reforms we needed. It would have added 1,500 new customs and border protection personnel, 4,300 asylum officers, 10,000 ICE detention beds, and 100 new immigration judges to add to the 734 already funded. It would have funded 100 new machines to detect fentanyl and \$1.4 billion for cities and

states to cover services provided by their law enforcement, and to expedite work permits for people who are in this country and have qualified.

Immigration law badly needed this bipartisan overhaul, however Trump forced Republican lawmakers to stop this border security bill endorsed by the Border Patrol, so he could use immigration problems as an issue in his campaign.

In the late 1800s Republicans supported immigration as did President Reagan in the 1980s, acknowledging that America needed workers and was a stronger country as a nation of immigrants. Biden has continuously asked for more funds for border control and Republicans have refused.

Despite the increased number of immigrants, a bill that would have improved the situation was rejected by Republicans. In the debate Trump claimed that Central American countries were emptying their prisons and mental institutions and causing a crime surge here. In fact, US crime rates including homicide have fallen 13%. 90% of deadly drugs coming in from Mexico come in through official ports not illegal crossings and 86% of the traffickers are U.S. citizens.

Due to Biden's new rules to keep families together, illegal land and river crossings have gone down, and more immigrants are applying for asylum at legal ports. We need faster ways to get work permits for them.

Texas State Representative Eddie Morales has offered a plan that provides solutions and takes the profit motive away from the cartels and "coyote" human traffickers. He asked Governor Abbot to call a special session on border security to discuss his plan and other solutions.

Immigration is nothing new and likely will not end. Do Republicans really want immigration problems solved or do they want more ways to blame Biden and Democrats and spread more lies for gullible people to believe? Common sense solutions are attainable if both sides work together in good faith. Use your vote to elect problem solvers.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Francell

Jeff Davis County Democratic Party

## Climate Change Within the Big Bend

Climatologists at Yale University have described climate change in Texas as a battle between the “Haves and the Have Nots.” To the south, with the Gulf of Mexico warming, “huge influxes of moisture” are bringing more rain and flooding. However, the dry desert air in the west is producing droughts with much less moisture. Mexico is experiencing a severe, ongoing drought that, according to the National Weather Service, could be partly responsible for the drought experienced here in Jeff Davis County. Our drought persists, with half of the county suffering from severe drought, and the other half from extreme drought.

(See <https://www.drought.gov/states/texas/county/jeff%20davis>)

Noted scientists at the Borderlands Research Institute’s 2024 Water in the Desert Conference have predicted an annual decrease of rain in the Big Bend with direct impacts on our water supplies. Without big conservation efforts, many regional aquifers could be depleted in future years. While acknowledging the need for changes in how we use our water, each of us can be a responsible part of the conservation solutions.

**What We Can Do:** We should take water conservation seriously and help with local conservation efforts. With regional towns and counties leading the way, we could start with what “the settlers used to do” -- catch rainwater in our tanks and cisterns for outdoor and home uses. We could require (or recommend) the use of low flush toilets; plant native plants, cactus, and drought tolerant trees, with rocks and stone for landscaping; use buffalo grass that greens out with the rain and goes dormant when none appears. New construction designs could use gray water for outdoor needs. All these options would extend our water supplies. They could become part of a permitting process for construction or, as a start, offered as recommended options with new permits.

As the changing climate brings new challenges to people, it also brings challenges for wildlife, including our 500 native bird species. Borderlands Research Institute and Trans-Pecos Bird Conservation (TBC) have written booklets on *Water for Wildlife* that are available on-line. TBC has placed a very helpful guide on water conservation at area libraries: *Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond* by Brad Lancaster. This publication provides details about what landowners can do to harvest rainwater to benefit people and wildlife.

Using these readily available tools, and with new conservation efforts and planning and involvement by county and community leaders, we citizens can practice water conservation, and hopefully live in this beautiful region for many years to come.

**Madge Lindsay**  
**Jeff Davis County Democrats**

# Jobs and the Economy

Prior to retirement, my education and much of my work was focused on demographics, economics, and economic forecasting. Even now, I continue to follow U.S. economic trends. Consequently, I am perplexed by polls showing that many Americans think our economy is bad, and some prefer the previous Trump economy.

Looking at statistics from reliable sources rather than social media, or misinformation and disinformation espoused by politicians and Russian bots, the picture seen is much different.

The record of the Biden-Harris administration is the most productive since LBJ. We have produced the world's best post-COVID recovery, achieved record low unemployment, and created more than 15 million new jobs – more than any administration in history -- in less than four years. We are witnessing record new small businesses opened, a record high stock market, and record domestic energy production. Record investments in infrastructure and clean energy have spurred economic growth.

Legislation pushed through Congress by Biden-Harris, such as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act, led to these achievements.

Not only is the Biden-Harris economy good, but it has also significantly outpaced the Trump-Pence economy:

Under Trump-Pence, real Gross National Product (GNP) increased **1.5%** annually, compared to Biden-Harris' **3.4%** annually.

Job growth in Trump-Pence's first three years averaged **1.4%**, compared to the Biden-Harris average growth rate of **2.9%**. However, if you count Trump-Pence's last year, 2020, their administration lost 3.1 million jobs at the end of four years.

Trump claims that his tax cuts (mostly for the wealthy) stimulated an investment boom, but business investment grew at a modest **2.6%** annually compared to the Biden-Harris growth rate of **5.1%**.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 304,000 new businesses were formed per month during the Trump-Pence administration, considerably fewer than the 442,000 per month during the Biden-Harris administration.

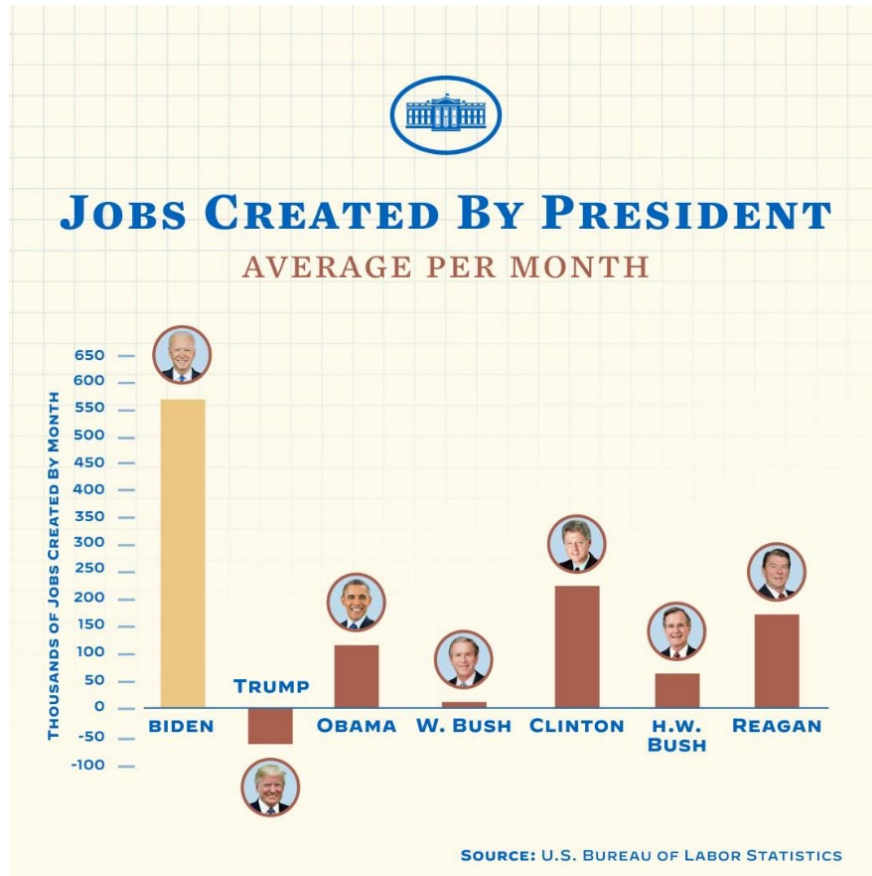
Complaints about the Biden-Harris economy center on inflation. Inflation averaged 2.1% under Trump-Pence, until the 2020 recession brought deflation. The economy began to grow again in 2021 under Biden-Harris, but demand for goods exceeded the supply, due to shortages caused by the pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and cuts in oil production by OPEC. Inflation affecting the world, not just the U.S., resulted. In the U.S., inflation peaked at 9.1% in 2022.

The Biden-Harris response to inflation can be judged relative to the response by other countries, especially those in the Western industrialized world. U.S. inflation fell earlier and more rapidly than in most industrialized countries. Inflation has now held at or near the Federal Reserve target of 2% for six months. The economy may achieve a rare "soft landing," hitting



target rates while avoiding a recession. However, high interest rates are now slowing economic growth, and this will continue until the Fed lowers rates, likely in September.

According to the Wall Street Journal, our economy is “the envy of the world.” We have increased the size of our economy by 5.4% above its pre-pandemic level, while bringing inflation down to an appropriate level. It would be difficult to do much better.



Roy Morey  
Jeff Davis County Democratic Party

Sources:

*The U.S. Economic Recovery in International Context – Assistant Secretary for Economic Policy Benjamin Harris and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Macroeconomic Policy Tara Sinclair, U.S. Department of the Treasury*

*The U.S. Economy Is Pulling Off Something Historic – Bryan Mena, CNN*

*Data Don't Lie: Harris Has the Facts to Refute Trump's Lies About the Economy – Robert J. Shapiro, Washington Monthly*

*The President's Speech, We Choose Freedom, My Interview W/Will Robbins, The Economy Is Strong – Simon Rosenberg, Hopium Chronicles*

## OUR ENDORSEMENT OF “COACH” WALZ

**The Jeff Davis County Democratic Party** enthusiastically welcomes Kamala Harris’ choice of two-term governor of Minnesota, Tim Walz, as her vice-presidential running mate. His background and experience are the perfect complement to her presidential candidacy.

Tim Walz grew up in a small town in rural Nebraska, the prairie heartland of America, and he remains very much a part of it. He has been a high school social studies teacher (and named ‘most inspiring teacher’), a highly successful football coach, a veteran and 24-year member of the Army National Guard. He used his GI Bill benefits to attend college. In his spare time, he hunts pheasants and catches fish. He and his wife Gwen are the parents of two children through IVF.

Like Harris, Walz has lengthy experience in local, state, and federal government, and many accomplishments along the way. From 2006 to 2018, he served as a moderate congressman from a rural, Republican-leaning district, and represented veterans on the House Veterans Affairs Committee and farmers on the House Agriculture Committee. Walz was elected governor of Minnesota in 2018 and re-elected in 2022. He is the most recent chair of the Democratic Governors Association.

Walz’ record of accomplishments as Governor of Minnesota is extensive, mostly focused on helping middle-income families:

- Tax credits for families with children.
- Paid family and medical leave.
- \$1 billion+ invested in affordable housing.
- Expansion of technology and infrastructure funding.
- The state’s universal free breakfast and lunch program for schoolchildren.
- A budget with significant increases in per-student funding and improvements in teacher retirement.
- Free public college tuition for low-income students.
- Automatic voter registration and the Minnesota Voting Rights Act that restored protections for minority voters, created a permanent absentee voter list, and made it easier for college students to vote.
- Legislation to achieve clean electricity by 2040 and replace lead pipes to ensure clean water for all.
- A law protecting people seeking or providing abortions in Minnesota.

- Commonsense gun safety legislation with background checks for private gun sales.

In his get-the-job-done style, Gov. Walz deservedly can take credit for these achievements, but his most important attribute may be something simpler: his character and personality.

Walz is folksy, warm, affable, approachable, plain-spoken and straight-talking. His Midwestern, rural roots, everyman, joyful appeal is likable, long overdue, and real, in contrast with some other vote-seekers we don't need to mention.



*Tim Walz gets a hug from students at Webster Elementary in Minneapolis, Minnesota after he signed a bill that guarantees free breakfasts and lunches for schoolchildren.*

**Maggie McCollum, Op-Ed Committee Chair**  
**Jeff Davis County Democratic Party**

## Separation of Church and State

While I am far from a constitutional scholar I did grow up in a Southern Baptist Church in El Paso, Texas. And, while not in the "Bible Belt" I remember the doctrine of "separation of church and state" being hammered into me on a regular basis and I bought into it like it was the gospel!

My 18 years of attending Sunday School, Training Union, Prayer Meetings and Worship services were followed by four years at Baylor where I took two semesters of religion and attended two years of chapel.

So, I feel I have some credibility regarding the issue of separation of church and state and am baffled as to why this is no longer a core belief among many Christians.

While living in Houston, I attended South Main Baptist Church where I had the privilege of having a very enlightened and knowledgeable Bible scholar as my Sunday school teacher. He was a devout Christian, a well-respected attorney and the best Sunday school teacher I ever had. I remember one Sunday when discussing other faith traditions him saying, "I can say, I have the best wife in the world, she is perfect for me, but you may also have the best wife in the world who is perfect for you, and that in no way diminishes either or our relationships." In this simple analogy, he was saying that while my religion/faith may be right for me, yours may be equally right and valid for you.

This brings us to the doctrine of "separation of church and state." Our constitution states in the 1st Amendment that religious freedom is protected and prohibits the government from the establishment of a religion. The idea that we are a Christian nation or founded on Christian principles is not entirely true. We are a nation of religious freedom that hopefully appreciates the teachings of love and charity in all faiths. For myself, I try to follow the teachings of Jesus. If that makes me a Christian, so be it, but more importantly I hope it helps me to be kind, accepting, charitable and loving.

So, while I can say, "I have the best husband in the world, it in no way diminishes the fact that your husband might be a pretty good one too!"

Sincerely,

Maggie McCollum