

The most important political issue facing our country today is the disintegration of the concept of truth. The lines between entertainment and news have become blurred by social media bubbles and the increasing hyperpartisanship of networks. Nearly all of the political issues that plague our society, from climate change denial and rampant conspiracy theories to the proliferation of hate groups, stem from the same fundamental matter - our post-truth politics.

With the increasing segregation of news and the emergence of echo chambers that only serve to magnify the most extreme of our beliefs while alienating the middle ground, compromise is lost. Trump's presidency exacerbated America's existing culture wars to an unprecedented extent. Now at least three different sets of facts exist for any given issue: the truth of the matter, the Democratic perspective, and the Republican angle. However, we cannot create a false equivalency. There is no mutual understanding to be found between insurrectionists who attempt to overturn the results of a legitimate election and earnest activists and politicians who use the system to implement popular will for the benefit of the people. When there is no objective truth, and "alternative facts" are indistinguishable from reality, democracy cannot survive. The refusal of republicans to wear masks in the face of a global pandemic is just the latest manifestation of their historic refusal to adhere to scientific evidence even at the cost of human life.

To confront this issue, Democrats must take substantial steps. We should create a bipartisan commission to explore solutions for the proliferation of disinformation. This could take the form of regulations on social media companies forcing them to fact-check the information published, so conspiracy theories that exploit their algorithms to spread will be thwarted. We also should encourage states to require civics education because a solid grasp of how our government works has been proven to increase participation and create better-educated citizens. As Thomas Jefferson once postulated - an informed citizenry is a hallmark of a functioning democracy. Only once these steps are taken do we have a chance to reclaim productive civil discourse and progress.