



Larry Elder

A Nation Divided and a World in Turmoil

A happy, upbeat friend does not watch television news, whether national or local, does not read a newspaper and avoids discussing politics, religion or even sports. Self-employed, he found out about something called the coronavirus while driving to work the day the California lockdown mandate began. That morning he encountered no traffic on the normally busy streets of Los Angeles and said, "What's going on?!" It seems unthinkable that someone in his mid-to-late 30s could erect news blinders, especially when he, like most everyone else, uses a smartphone for personal and business matters. He even maintains a Facebook page to keep up with friends and family.

He does not know that since Joe Biden became president, five million illegal aliens entered the U.S. from over 100 foreign countries, their whereabouts now mostly unknown. Border patrol arrested dozens of border crossers on the terror watch list, with no telling how many entered undetected.

He does not know that America faces a crisis of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid more potent than heroin by as much as a factor of 50, and morphine by as much as a factor of 100, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. China supplies the precursor chemicals and Mexican cartels process, manufacture and bring the fentanyl into the United States. At 64,000 deaths among those aged 18 to 49 in 2021, fentanyl killed more than those who died from COVID-19, cancer and car accidents combined.

He knows nothing about a Donald Trump-hating Manhattan district attorney who might arrest and indict the former president under a legal theory that even *The New York Times* called "untested." He does not know about the "weaponization" and collusion of the DOJ and Big Tech social media platforms to attack conservatives, stifle dissent about vaccine and mask mandates and suppress the cost-benefit debate about COVID-19 lockdowns.

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Among other things, the student learning loss suffered due to virtual versus in-school learning.

He knows nothing about communist China's growing aggression, its increasing world power and our growing dependence on China for things not made here. We rely on China for vital "rare earth minerals" like lithium, cobalt and nickel — used in cellphones and electric vehicle batteries — that are either mined in China or in places under China's control. Likely encouraged by Biden's disastrous pull out of Afghanistan, Russia invaded Ukraine with Chinese support. World peace and freedom are now challenged unlike anything seen since World War II.

He knows nothing about how Iran, the world's largest sponsor of terror, stands on the brink of making a nuclear bomb.

He knows nothing about how inflation, still at 40-year highs, decreased the value of bank holdings, is a major contributing factor to the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, and threatens the solvency of several more.

He is oblivious to today's cancerous "cancel culture" professors, who disagree with reparations, race-based preferences, critical race theory and the DEI agenda, face denunciation by students and fellow faculty and termination by woke school administrators.

He, of course, knows about high gas prices but knows nothing the main contributing factor, Biden's attack on oil and gas and his imposition of anti-fossil fuel policies and regulations.

My friend has a short drive to work in a fairly safe area and knows little about rising crime, including violent crime, and the soft-on-crime policies of the current Los Angeles County DA. This denunciation of the "systemically racist" police has triggered an upsurge in crime not just in Los Angeles, but in other cities.

California has the country's highest state income tax, ranks near the bottom in K-12 government schools despite spending over \$20k per student, has a budget deficit of \$20 billion and an unfunded pension liability at over \$1.5 trillion, the highest in the nation. Housing prices at 175% above the national average helped drive a net population loss of 500,000 in the last three years.

My happy friend resembles the chain-smoker who grew tired of reading newspaper articles that linked cigarette smoking to cancer. So, he decided to stop... reading newspapers. Who knows? Maybe my friend has a point.

Larry Elder is a bestselling author and nationally syndicated radio talk-show host. To find out more about Larry Elder, or become an "Elderado," visit www.LarryElder.com. Follow Larry on Twitter @larryelder. To read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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