

TUCSON OPINION

## Local opinion: Why are Americans rising up in protest?

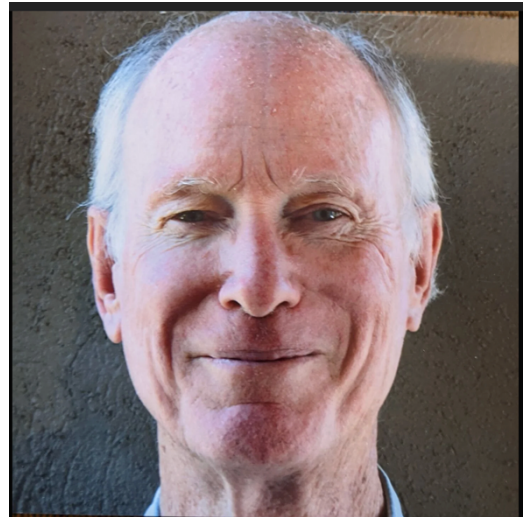
**Phineas Anderson** *Special to the Arizona Daily Star*

*The following is the opinion and analysis of the writer: Phineas Anderson*

There are a lot of protests going on around town.

The underlying theme of all the protests is Defend our Constitution, Save our Democracy.

The protests all come back to President Donald Trump and his enablers, like Elon Musk. What is Trump doing that we feel a strong need to defend our Constitution? How is he threatening our Democracy? What causes so many Americans of all political persuasions to feel a strong need to organize and save our nation?



Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the Constitution state that we have three co-equal branches of government, each with its own specific tasks and powers. The Founders created a system of checks and balances so that no one branch dominated the others. But Trump has done everything he can to enhance the power of the executive branch at the expense of the legislative and judiciary branches. He is moving at a rapid pace to change our democracy to an autocracy, “a system of government by one person with absolute power.”

At this time, the legislative branch does his bidding. The Republicans control both houses of Congress, and their members have yet to challenge even his most egregious and corrupt actions. There is no Republican standing up as a “profile in courage” like John McCain did in 2017. Will a handful of Republicans emerge to kill the reconciliation bill that transfers the “savings” from firing 83,000 employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs and taking millions of poor people off Medicaid rolls in order to extend the tax cuts that primarily benefit the rich?

The only branch of government standing in Trump’s way is the judiciary. As of June 4, 188 rulings have partly or wholly blocked a number of Trump’s initiatives, many on Constitutional grounds. Other presidents, of course, have been critical of judges and their opinions, but not at the level of Trump’s constant personal attacks that now put in danger not only the judges, but also members of their families.

Trump has also tried to intimidate law firms that could potentially be hired to bring suits against his administration. Some law firms have caved to his demands to forego such business; others have not.

What holds our democracy together, its keystone if you will, is the implementation of the rule of law. In his first days in office, Trump illegally fired 17 non-partisan Inspectors General, whose duties include investigating corruption and fraud in the government. He fired the head of the Office of Special Counsel, the agency that protects whistleblowers from retaliation for disclosing wrongdoing in the executive branch. If a President removes guardrails that protect against corruption, the chances of corruption happening, that is, breaking the law, are high.

Trump showed his marked disdain for the rule of law when he pardoned (we should never forget this) convicted seditionists and felons who attacked and injured members of law enforcement on January 6, 2021. Since then, he has pardoned people who were convicted of bribery, tax evasion and fraud. He commuted the sentences of a number of drug dealers, most recently a gang member serving several life sentences for multiple crimes, including murder. Some say, as with Trump's lying, all presidents do it. Historically speaking, Trump is in a league of his own; no other president comes close.

An essential part of keeping a democracy healthy is a free press. The press, too, has been intimidated, being called the "enemy of the people." Journalists worry about their safety as Trump encourages a climate of hostility towards the media. Many in the press are standing firm.

These are a few of the reasons why Americans of all stripes are protesting. The largest protest in many years will occur nationwide on June 14, called No Kings. Here in Tucson, a motor march has been organized that will extend over four miles, with hundreds of decorated cars following a 14-mile route around the city (go to [drivefordemocracy.com](https://drivefordemocracy.com) for more details).

More and more Americans are joining the protest rallies to proclaim "We, the people, do solemnly swear to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Since Trump will not uphold his presidential oath, we will.

*Phineas Anderson is a former federal administrator and school superintendent. He co-founded Democracy Unites Us with his wife Mitchell.*