

DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND FREE MARKETS UNDER THREAT: IT'S TIME TO ACT

As U.S. Chamber President and CEO Suzanne P. Clark has noted, it is time for all of us to act to support free markets and democracy. The Mansfield Center and U.S. Chambers share an unwavering commitment to democracy, opportunity and free enterprise. The Mansfield Center is here to support W.A.C.E. in these efforts.



The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center was founded by an Act of Congress in 1983. We carry forward Mike Mansfield's legacy of statesmanship, integrity, and civility in public affairs. The Senate's longest-serving Majority Leader was a calming and stabilizing force for the nation. He understood that partisanship was always secondary to a shared obligation to the public good and the Constitution. That ethic earned him respect from across the political spectrum for his bipartisan leadership, his willingness to share power and his commitment to listening to those with differing opinions. The Mansfield Center continues promoting that legacy by fulfilling a mandate to promote civil society education and outreach.

Senator Mansfield understood that political stability provides a sense of security for business, the economy, and national security. Such stability plays a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to long-term business operations, investment, and growth. Steady political systems minimize the risks of sudden policy changes, social unrest, or political upheaval, which can disrupt business operations and investment. Predictability also allows businesses to plan for the long term, allocate resources efficiently, and develop sustainable strategies. When political conditions are constant and governance structures are reliable, investor confidence increases and draws in additional supporters. This leads to added investment, job creation, and economic growth. Furthermore, political stability often translates into favorable regulatory frameworks and policies. These factors incentivize entrepreneurship, innovation, and business expansion. In contrast, political instability can cause clear threats to national security and business planning. Uncertainty and volatility lead to an unpredictable business environment, hinder decision-making, deter investment, and increase risks.



Significant elements of the American citizenry have grown doubtful about democracy. More Americans have become increasingly open to authoritarian tactics like misinformation, resulting in real domestic and international threats to our economy and national security. Fewer Americans believe that democracy is thriving in our country, despite the majority's steadfast belief in our Constitution and representational government. American democracy is facing greater threats than at any point in our lifetimes.

Recent polling confirms that many are distrustful of our

government. A May 2023 CBS/YouGov poll found that 69% of Republicans and those who lean Republican do not believe that President Biden is a legitimate president. A December 2021 Washington Post/University of Maryland poll revealed that the percentage of Americans who believe that violent action against the government is justified at times stood at an astonishing 34 percent. A January 2022 National Public Radio/Ipsos poll noted that 70 percent of Americans believe that America is in crisis and at risk of failing.



Our Founders advised that maintaining a healthy democracy demands much, both from leaders and common

citizens. A healthy democracy requires full participation from engaged citizens from all segments of the community. The foundation of such participation is a basic understanding of history and civics – both of which have been eroding. The National Assessment of Educational Progress 2022 Civics and U.S. History Assessments at Grade 8 show a decline in student knowledge of both U.S. history and civics: only 13 percent of eighth graders are considered proficient in U.S. history, with only 22 percent proficient in civics. These results demonstrate the challenges we as a nation face in building an informed and engaged citizenry.

To protect our democracy and sustain our way of life, we need your help. Join us in building upon Senator Mike Mansfield’s legacy of statesmanship, ethical leadership, and bipartisanship to address the challenges facing our world. We honor Senator Mansfield’s legacy of patriotic statesmanship to bridge divides from a variety of perspectives, unified by our love of country and commitment to democracy. It is time for all of us to act.

“Democracy—as we know it, love it, and understand it—is today facing a challenge as to its very existence. This challenge must be met: met by all who believe in its fundamental processes and who love the liberties and responsibilities of a democracy.”

– Mike Mansfield, 1939

CONTACT US

Executive Director Deena Mansour | 406.274.0992
deena.mansour@umontana.edu | umt.edu/mansfield



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