

Rule of law faces stiff test against unbridled attacks

In the “land of the free,” there are those in this country that are quite intent on pushing our democracy closer to a one-party state.

The irony of that development was on full display last Tuesday when Donald Trump made his own sort of history, becoming the first former president or sitting president to be arraigned for a crime. He is alleged to have participated in a hush-money scheme to silence a porn star from disclosing any mention of a reported extramarital affair, an infidelity that the former president denies ever happened.

Whether he was involved in brokering the alleged deal will be for the American system of justice to decide. And we can all be thankful for that often-overlooked fact.

Evidently, what’s on trial now in the world of public opinion is the future of one of our most cherished governmental principles – the rule of law.

In recent years, it has taken a flogging from those who espouse a warped sense of patriotism, denouncing attempts to hold those accused of wonton criminal behavior accountable for their alleged wrongdoings. Instead, they view investigations into alleged crimes as a weaponization of the justice system, as mere legal tactics deployed to punish political opponents.

In Trump’s case, he should be grateful that he lives in a country where there is a systematic approach to equal justice instead of residing in a totalitarian state where the courts have been neutered to remove all judicial safeguards for the accused.

His legal predicament, just one of many facing the former president, was

the byproduct of a grand jury proceeding in which the panel decided after weeks of hearing testimony and gathering information that there was sufficient evidence to warrant criminal charges.

Thirty-four counts, in fact.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg announced the indictment March 30, setting in motion a series of legal steps leading up to Trump’s arraignment on April 4, procedures meant to afford the defendant the presumption of innocence throughout pre-trial hearings and any related court proceedings.

For his role, Bragg has come under repeated fire from Trump and his political allies, who have accused the district attorney of being a “degenerate psychopath” bent on conducting a “witch hunt” that will cause “irreparable harm” to the American system of justice.

And that’s just for starters, as other Trump acolytes have likened the legal proceedings to a modern-day version of the “crucifixion of Jesus Christ,” apparently in hopes that the religious analogy will place the defendant in a divine light as he embarks on a journey certain to be riveting to the very end.

The political bombast by those elected officials is further evidence of their willingness to trample the Constitution and to violate their oaths of office. To categorize their actions as shameful would be the understatement of the year, particularly when they campaigned on a platform built on protecting individual civil liberties.

In an unexpected way, Trump’s troubles – and the concerted efforts by his political supporters to downplay them – remind us of why we started Primerus™ more than 30 years ago.



Back then, the legal profession and American system of justice were under siege as well, fending off attacks from everyone with a lame lawyer joke to tell or an axe to grind. In the face of that hostility, we decided it was time to take a stand, mounting a counter-offensive that spelled out the true value of the legal profession’s worth to a civilized society. We were about to engage in a battle that actually had been going on since Shakespearean times, when the noted bard wrote in the play “Henry VI” the immortal line, “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers.”

Initially, our efforts to change the public’s perception of the legal profession came in the form of a series of creative newspaper and television ads designed to tell “the rest of the story,” as famed radio broadcaster Paul Harvey was fond of saying. The ad campaign was centered on the theme of “Good People Who Happen to Be Good Lawyers™.”

Still time to change the ending to a lesson that keeps repeating

One of those ads centered on a drawing of Lady Justice, holding the scales of justice in one hand and a sword in the other, atop a headline that proclaimed, “She may be blind, but she isn’t stupid.”

Another featured a drawing of a “fat cat” in a three-piece pinstripe suit, looking smug with cigar in hand as the feline stands atop a headline, “In court, he’s no bigger than you.”

A third even was bold enough to highlight photos of Hitler, Stalin, and Ayatollah Khomeini, bearing the message of “Three leaders who really knew how to streamline a legal system.”

Tyrannical law, by any measure, is brazenly “efficient,” the ad noted.

“Their law wasted no time or money,” the ad message said of the three tyrants. “They allowed no lengthy trials or appeals.

“So next time you hear someone lament our legal system’s inefficiency, remind them: efficiency is possible. But its price is horribly high.”

The collective message of those ads needs to be underscored now more than ever, reminding critics of the fundamental fairness built into our time-honored system of justice that protects the rights of the accused at every turn in the legal proceedings, and, more importantly, serves as the principal safeguard against malicious prosecution.

Best regards,

Jack Buchanan, President