



College of Liberal Arts and
Human Sciences

School of Public and
International Affairs

Institute for Policy & Governance
201 West Roanoke Street (0489)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
P: (540) 231-6775 F: (540) 231-6722
E: ipg@vt.edu
www.ipg.vt.edu

5 pieces worth reading

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By: Billy Parvatam

Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance

<https://ipg.vt.edu/>

Dear friends of VTIPG and CCC,

We share five articles each week that we find timely and meaningful that address significant concerns related to the state of democracy and civil society. We aim to offer pieces that illuminate a wide array of dimensions of our country's policy and governance challenges and the state of social norms that sustain the possibility of addressing them successfully. **Please note, the views expressed in these essays do not necessarily reflect the perspective of VTIPG or Virginia Tech.** We also upload these pieces to our website. You may find the archive at [News and Opportunities](#) at <http://ipg.vt.edu/>

If you would like to suggest an article or essay for consideration for this series, and I encourage you to do so, please contact me, Billy Parvatam, at pbilly97@vt.edu.

- First up, is a *New York Times* piece that examines why rural America has emerged as a stronghold for the Republican Party.
- Second, we offer an article from Stephen Collinson of *CNN* that discusses the revelation that officials have found classified documents in former Vice President Mike Pence's personal residence. Collinson argues that former President Donald Trump could exploit this turn in the GOP presidential primaries.
- A third story, from *The Hill*, celebrates the passage of the bipartisan Electoral Count Reform Act.
- Our fourth offering, from *Vox*, analyzes Arizona Democratic Congressman Ruben Gallego's decision to challenge Senator Kyrsten Sinema from the left in the coming election cycle and speculates concerning how that election could play out.
- Last, we share an article from *ABC News* that examines a recent report that the continent of Africa has become less safe and democratic during the past decade.

The resentment fueling the Republican Party is not coming from the suburbs

Long time *New York Times* columnist Thomas Edsall argues that rural America is the foundation of the Republican Party's strength in the House and Senate, and the basis too, for the rightward tilt of the Electoral College. He suggests that this situation can be attributed to several factors,

Ut Prosim (That I may Serve)

including the decline of union jobs in the upper Midwest and ongoing cultural and racial controversies reflected in several Supreme Court decisions in recent years.

Edsall, T. (2023, January 25). “The resentment fueling the Republican Party is not coming from the suburbs.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/25/opinion/rural-voters-republican-realignment.html>

Trump seeks to exploit Pence’s discomfort

Stephen Collinson argues in this *CNN* piece that the discovery of classified documents in former Vice President Mike Pence’s Indiana home provides a political opening to former President Donald Trump. This is so, Collinson contends, because unless voters are carefully following the story, many may not be able to distinguish among the classified document cases of Pence, Trump, and President Joe Biden. Trump may seek to exploit such possible ignorance.

Collinson, S. (2023, January 25). “Trump seeks to exploit Pence's discomfort.” *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/25/politics/pence-classified-documents-biden-trump/index.html>

Two cheers for democracy in America

Stuart Gerson of *The Hill* celebrates the passage of the Electoral Count Reform Act (ECRA) in this story and highlights the fact that the law eliminates any argument that the vice president may overturn the results of a presidential election. For example, the new law stipulates that one-fifth of the members of each chamber must raise an objection to national electoral results for any such motion to be considered, whereas previous legislation required that just one Representative and Senator do so. Gerson contends that the ECRA constitutes a bipartisan achievement and one that will help to protect American democracy.

Gerson, S. (2023, January 22). “Two cheers for democracy in America.” *The Hill*. Retrieved from <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/3814602-two-cheers-for-democracy-in-america/>

Ruben Gallego’s Kyrsten Sinema challenge is on – with big implications for Democrats’ future

Christian Paz argues in this *Vox* piece that Democratic Congressman Ruben Gallego’s decision to challenge incumbent Independent Senator Kyrsten Sinema will test whether a more progressive leader can win an Arizona statewide election, despite the state’s apparent Democratic trend in recent elections. Paz suggests that in a race that may be critical in determining control of the U.S. Senate, Gallego will have to campaign successfully as a champion of the working class to distinguish himself from Sinema and the Republican candidate.

Paz, C. (2023, January 23). “Ruben Gallego's Kyrsten Sinema challenge is on—with big implications for Democrats' future.” *Vox*. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/23567510/ruben-gallego-kyrsten-sinema-arizona-senate-race-2024>

Report: Much of Africa less safe, democratic than in 2012

This story by Krista Larson of *ABC News* discusses a new report from the Mo Ibrahim foundation that argues that the continent of Africa is “less safe, secure, and democratic” than it was a decade ago, due to military coups and armed conflict during that period. The Foundation found that approximately 70% of Africans saw a decrease in the rule of law in their country, a trend that was exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as many governments used restrictions to suppress dissent.

Larson, K. (2023, January 25). “Report: Much of Africa less safe, democratic than in 2012.” *ABC News*. Retrieved from <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/report-africa-safe-democratic-2012-96655794>