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Peacebuilding



NETWORK

Changing This Dangerous Path: Rebuilding and Strengthening Our Democracy and Building Sustainable Peace in the United States

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Washington, D.C., USA. – On September 18th, the [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#) and the [Trust Network](#) urge President Biden and the U.S. Congress to propose a new American initiative to support civic engagement and democracy, strengthening efforts at the national, regional, and community levels. The United States is experiencing [escalating violent conflict](#) and [extremism](#), [increasing toxic polarization](#), and [worsening social cohesion](#), leading to an [increasingly flawed democracy](#). America has seen its rankings steadily declining in the Global Peace Index, and the [Fund for Peace's Fragile States \(FSI\) Index 2021 found](#) that the country that saw the largest year-on-year worsening in its total score in 2021 is the United States.

[Nearly 200 scholars recently released a statement](#) of concern that “our entire democracy is now at risk.” Unfortunately, [most Americans agree](#). 93% say democracy is either under attack (56%) or being tested but not under attack (37%); only 6% say American democracy is in no danger. Religious leaders in the United States have also sounded the alarm. A coalition of evangelical Christian leaders warned against increasing political extremism. In an [open letter](#), more than 100 pastors, ministry and seminary leaders, and other prominent



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evangelicals expressed concern about that the growing "radicalization" they are seeing that has led to violence.

But we do not have to accept violent conflict and a declining democracy; we can change this dangerous path and rebuild and strengthen our democracy.

Last July, AfP sent the Biden Administration a set of urgent recommendations [*Creating a Comprehensive Framework to Address the Causes of Violent Extremism, Declining Democracy, Worsening Social Cohesion and Violence Throughout the United States.*](#) We must urgently support those working on civic engagement and empower local communities to tackle toxic polarization and worsening social cohesion. We must greatly expand these impactful efforts.

President Reagan said in a [speech](#) a year before establishing the National Endowment for Democracy, "The objective I propose is quite simple to state: to foster the infrastructure of democracy—the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities—which allows a people to choose their own way, to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means." While President Biden and bipartisan members of Congress are focusing much effort and political capital on rebuilding America's road and bridges, much needs to be done to "foster its infrastructure of democracy." We can follow President Reagan's model for us decades ago through a similar new American initiative here at home.

President Biden campaigned on the promise of restoring "dignified leadership at home" and renewing our democracy. The time is now to deliver on that promise. AfP, the Trust Network, and our partner organizations stand ready to support these much-needed efforts to renew, rebuild, and protect our democracy, but words alone are not enough. It will take resources, political will, and Americans working together.

With over 150 member organizations, AfP brings together the largest development organizations, most innovative academic institutions, and influential humanitarian and faith-based groups to harness collective action for peace. We build coalitions in key areas of strategy and policy to elevate the entire peacebuilding field, tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.

The TRUST Network was founded in October 2020 in recognition of the rifts in our society and the harsh test to which our nation's resiliency is being put. [Mediators Beyond Borders International \(MBBI\)](#) is the organizational host. The [National](#)



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Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM) and Political Incident Reporting USA (PIRUSA) [formerly Election Incident Reporting (EIRUSA)] are key process facilitators. These three founding co-conveners are joined by a rapidly expanding partnership of, currently, 30+ additional organizations and networks, 25 local convening centers, and several hundred individuals each of whom has training and/or experience in mediative, restorative or other nonviolent community-building practices.