

# KEIZERTIMES PUBLIC SQUARE

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## America is still strong

Does anyone not remember where they were on Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001 when terrorists crashed into New York City, Arlington, Virg., and Shanksville, Penn.?

One is shocked anew when revisiting video of planes smashing into the towers of the World Trade Center and then those two buildings crumbling down onto the streets of lower Manhattan. Then, Americans were collectively angry and scared. Then, we were all brothers and sisters, sharing in common grief. At once, strangers were like family; families became closer.

Of the many changes wrought by the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, many felt that America had internally changed for the better—we were our brother's keeper. No one was a stranger. We were one. We were America Strong.

The country has once again been knocked akilter with the COVID-19 pandemic. Our brotherly bonds post-Sept. 11, 2001 frayed as masks and vaccines became a dividing line, politics trumping science. The country became politically and culturally divided long before COVID, but the pandemic makes that division more personal.

Regardless of red states or blue states, mask mandates or not, we are Americans and have much more in common. Everyone puts their pants on one leg at a time; we all love our children and families. We are loyal to our friends. Every person wants to feel safe and secure. Those are the similarities we should embrace and celebrate.

The horrors of 9-11 will live in our national psyche for decades. What should

## Editorial

also be remembered, fostered and preserved is the unity that tragedy brought to every corner of the country on that day.

A national leader once said that enemies foreign or domestic could never defeat the United States; we could only do that ourselves. America is not defeated; it has been knocked down, but the victor is the one who gets back up to fight another day.

Americans are not ready to fold, not by a long shot. —LAZ

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a **letter to the editor** (300 words),  
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## Comforter in Chief? Not really

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

Before he became president, stories about now-President Joe Biden phoning friends and even strangers to offer comfort after deaths in their family were legend.

Having endured the awful deaths of a wife and baby daughter in 1972 and elder son Beau in 2015, Biden was, in news-speak, “shaped by grief.” *Politico*’s Michael Kruse called grief Biden’s “superpower.”

The quick-with-a-hug Biden entered office as a seeming natural “comforter in chief.”

Something has changed. Biden’s halo of compassion lost some sheen Sunday, Sept. 3, at Dover Air Force Base when he talked privately to the families of 13 fallen service members who died in Kabul.

During the “dignified transfer” ceremony, Biden was caught on camera repeatedly checking his watch.

Later, after Biden approached grieving family members to offer his condolences, many said that his remarks lacked authenticity.

“I was able to stand about 15 seconds of his fake, scripted apology and I had to walk away,” Cheyenne McCollum, whose brother Lance Cpl. Rylee McCollum died in the terrorist attack, told *Fox and Friends*.

Asked about some families’ disappointment with Biden’s attempt to console them, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki declined to expound on what was said. She did offer that Biden is grateful for the families’ sacrifice and “he knows firsthand what it’s like to lose a child.”

Psaki’s response was as tone-deaf as Biden’s remarks to mourning families, as both the president and his spokesperson made these 13 deaths about Biden and his grief.



“When he just kept talking about his son so much it was just—my interest was lost in that. I was more focused on my own son than what happened with him and his son,” Mark Schmitz, whose 20-year-old son Jared was killed in the explosion, told *The Washington Post*. “I’m not trying to insult the president, but it just didn’t seem that appropriate to spend that much time on his own son.”

“I think it was all him trying to say he understands grief,” Schmitz added. “But when you’re the one responsible for ultimately the way things went down, you kind of feel like that person should own it a little bit more. Our son is now gone. Because of a direct decision or game plan—or lack thereof—that he put in place.”

Biden frequently mentions his son Beau, who was awarded a Bronze Star for his service in Iraq, as a way to show kinship with U.S. troops and their families. Better to talk about Beau Biden’s military service than the president’s five student draft deferments.

Now he is the commander in chief, and he’s found himself in the position of former President George W. Bush.

This time, mourning parents aren’t blaming a president for sending their children to war to die. They’re angry that he ordered a botched withdrawal in which their children were killed—and he thought it was about his grief.

He doesn’t know what to say to them, and I don’t know what to say about him, other than: He doesn’t seem to be in command.

(Creators Syndicate)

## Make a citizen, make a voter

To the Editor:

I feel that the people of the United States have gotten away from the idea our founders considered what it meant to be a citizen. Have you ever wondered about the naturalization test that the immigrants had to pass to become a citizen?

The leaders of the House of Representatives are more concerned about the number of people who vote. They are against the people who vote showing their identification. However, the law is that a person must be of voting age and must be a citizen to vote. So they must show an identification to prove that information. In Oregon when you register to vote you must sign the application form. Therefore the signature is then verified when you send in your ballot.

I have wondered how many people vote in more than one state. How many people that vote aren’t citizens without showing an ID. Shouldn’t there be some kind of identification to prove they are eligible to vote?

The members of the U.S. Congress and Senate need to get their act together

## Letters

and help the people that came to the United States as children become citizens. Several people I know were brought to the United States when they were children. Their parents got their citizenship but the children didn’t get their’s. These people are now adults and work and pay taxes in the United States, but it has cost them thousands of dollars in lawyer fees trying to become citizens. Yet they can’t cross the hurdle to become citizens.

Maybe it is time for us to get new representatives and senators since they can’t seem to do the job and help those people.

So as we celebrate Constitution Week let’s all call or write our congressman and tell them to get their job done and make it possible for these people to become citizens. There also should be a law that all people who vote must show an ID to vote or have their signature verified.

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