

# My AMERICA

...Is Democracy Floundering?



Flanagan Unleashed!

By Fred Flanagan

## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank the many men and women *who have served honorably* in government, and the brave men and women who served their county with ethics and integrity. *Public service for many has been and is an honorable endeavor.*

We Americans, enjoy the right and privilege to vote because of many brave Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice to establish and then maintain a free nation.

The opinions and philosophies expressed in this book are mine, and not those of any other individual or political party.

Fred Flanagan

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## Some Favorite Words!

1. **(to) Flounder** – to make clumsy attempts to move or regain one's balance
2. **Obfuscation** - To make so confused or opaque as to be difficult to perceive or understand.
3. **Prevarication** - to stray from or evade the truth; equivocate.
4. **Democracy** - The common people, considered as the primary source of political power.
5. **Politics** - The art or science of government or governing, especially the governing of a political entity, such as a nation, and the administration and control of its internal and external affairs.
6. **Politician** - One who is actively involved in politics, especially party politics.
7. **Oligarchy** - government by a few, especially by a small faction of persons or families.
8. **Preemptive** - Relating to or constituting a military strike made so as to gain the advantage when an enemy strike is believed to be imminent.
9. **Debate** - A formal contest of argumentation in which two opposing teams defend and attack a given proposition.
10. **Vote!** - To express one's preference for a candidate or for a proposed resolution of an issue; cast a vote.

**Definitions from American Heritage Dictionary**

## Introduction

We all have a responsibility to participate in our American political process. Challenge yourself to ask questions about what you hear. Listen for what is not being said by political candidates and elected officials. Ask yourself why questions aren't answered? Evaluate the use of fear and patriotic symbols to silence opposing views.

My purpose in writing this book is to encourage those not participating in the political process to embrace their responsibility as citizens in a democracy.

We must not allow anyone to successfully use emotional issues to divide our nation. *We are a nation of great diversity.* America is known for eventually correcting flawed policies.

Freedom of speech allows me to write these, my personal views. We need to protect our citizens' rights to express their opinions without fear of retaliation from any political party or administration.

I hope you will discuss the issues and decide for yourself. Listen to both sides of every issue. When you make an effort to listen to both sides of an issue, you can better evaluate the facts on which to base your decision.

If I cause you to think about the dynamics of political events, well designed scripts, and political tactics used to obfuscate the issues, then I will have accomplished my goal in writing, "*My America ...Is Democracy floundering?*" *Flanagan Unleashed!*

*You can make a difference.* Your children and generations to follow deserve the opportunity to live in the greatest country and democracy in the world! We have one of the richest countries in the world, but not everyone is enjoying those riches—or the American dream.

Our American Citizens are the most critical part of our democracy. Our American Citizens are the people who have to fight the wars and make the ultimate sacrifice for their country. It has been the working men and women who made this country great; it is the working men and women who must keep it great!



## Accountability American Style!

We cannot allow government leaders to ignore the people who elected them nor can we ignore our responsibility to be involved citizens.

While our country faces a new level of terrorist threat and new potentially devastating economic trends, the majority of our leaders (on both sides of the aisle) continue to bicker like spoiled children.

The mean spirited struggle for power by both major political parties is destroying the possibility for consensus on serious issues. Members of both major political parties are failing the American people.

### **It is time to take names and kick butt!**

We have serious issues concerning failed border security. Many of our Congressional Leaders side with Corporate America, and cheap labor takes precedence over secure borders. How can we believe that our government can secure other countries, when we can't even secure our own borders?

The trade deficit is a serious problem that our country faces. We are exporting American jobs and technology at record levels. Why?

The American people *can no longer sit back and trust* that all the elected representatives will do what is right for the American people who elected them, unless we hold their feet to the fire.

As an American citizen, I am deeply concerned about the future of our democracy. We have ideologists who believe they were correct in the decision to go to war in Iraq. Anyone who questions the decision to send our brave men and women into harm's way in Iraq, is called weak on defense or even worse a traitor. **It is shameful!**

We cannot have honest dialog on serious issues like war and peace if all we can expect from the opposing side is personal attacks and hyperbole. The American flag, and all it symbolizes, belongs to *all of us*.

We must wake up. **Damn It!** We must pay attention! If the people we elect fail to represent us, we must send a message in the next election. **We must exercise our right to vote! We must believe that one vote counts!**

The American people have *not only* the right to *question* those they elect, but they have an *obligation* to participate in the political process. A democracy can only survive with honest dialog and citizen involvement.

In this book, I cover my perspectives on the behavior of politicians, and the obfuscation and prevarication used to silence opponents and mislead the public. Understanding the sometimes subtle scripts and dynamics used by politicians is helpful in understanding what isn't being said, and what is being *misstated* or taken *out of context*.

### **Libby Liberated ?**

The commutation of the Scooter Libby jail sentence is yet another example of arrogance by President George W. Bush. With the commutation of Scooter Libby's jail sentence for obstruction of justice, perjury and lying to federal officials, Bush reinforces the lack of accountability by elected officials and presidential appointees.

By now the majority of American citizens get the message that our self-proclaimed decider, King George, is above the laws of our nation. President Bush and Co-president Dick Cheney answer to no one — least of all the American people. After all, the American people weren't elected and, they have no political capital to spend.

This latest abuse of power sends a clear signal to the American people — equal justice for all is in doubt and in jeopardy. Was there a “**quid pro quo**” from the outset of the Libby trial? Did Scooter Libby fall on the sword for Dick Cheney with the understanding that if he protected the vice-president he would never spend a day in jail?

Bush loyalists and his highly paid advocates still claim Scooter Libby committed no crime because there was no underlying crime charged. Shouldn't the real argument be that a *possible* crime was under investigation when Mr. Libby *obstructed justice* and *lied* to federal investigators? If Mr. Libby had told the truth, an underlying crime may have been charged: **the intentional outing of a covert agent!**

Bush supporters still claim Valerie Plame was not a covert agent even though both the FBI and the special prosecutor made it clear that Valerie Plame was a covert agent.

The truth appears to be elusive when it comes to the Bush loyalists, and the commutation of Scooter Libby's jail sentence just darkens an already ominous cloud over the White House.

While the Libby commutation story is being debated, the real story is being ignored. Libby was deeply involved in the lead up to an unnecessary war of choice. With over 3500 killed in action and over 25000 wounded, shouldn't the real debate be about how our nation was taken into an unnecessary, preemptive, war of choice in Iraq? Where is the accountability?

I think it is high time for *every citizen to speak out and demand the truth* from this administration. We the people have to speak out if our government of the people, by the people, and for the people is to survive.

It is unlikely that the impeachment of President Bush and Co-president Dick Cheney will occur. It is even more unlikely that President Bush or Dick Cheney will find enough real patriotism, integrity or courage to do the correct thing for their country: *resign from office!*

## Is Democracy Floundering?

The clock is ticking on our Democracy as we envision it. Alarmist? I think not! I believe that government of the people, by the people and for the people, as established by our Founding Fathers, is quickly becoming a government of the (rich) elite, by the elite and for the elite. **Isn't that Oligarchy?**

In the current political climate, it feels like a majority of Congressional leaders have sold out to Big Business and Special Interest Groups. The will of the majority has become irrelevant. The rapidly escalating trend of selling off American assets and out-sourcing every possible job is only one symptom of the American Oligarchy. Profits, at any cost to the people, are the real Religion of those in control. Moral Values! Where?

When the American people can't debate the issue of war without being attacked by government officials and their well paid advocates, our Democracy is seriously at risk.

When a Vice-president refers to people opposing war as "background noise," our Democracy is at risk!

When a President is allowed to ignore the laws of our Nation, trust me, our Democracy is at risk.

When even a *minority* of citizens are not willing to hold their leaders accountable, our Democracy is at risk.

When half of our eligible voters fail to vote, our Democracy is at risk. The future of our Democracy is dependant on citizen involvement.

When the majority of the media sources are owned by big business, our Democracy is at risk. When journalists who ask the tough questions are ridiculed or painted as disrespectful to the President, our Democracy is at risk. Respect is a two-way street.

President Bush continually misled our nation on wiretap programs, leaks of classified information and the justification for the war in Iraq—an aggression, and *a war of choice*.

It is time for serious changes in our government leadership. The American people can start making the needed changes in the next election. It is time to send many in Congress home. The elected officials who fail to represent the will of the people need to be sent packing.

The corruption in our government seems widespread. It will take time to repair our floundering Democracy. The only hope for our government of the people, by the people, and for the people, *is with the people*.

**And, I think we're floundering!**



## Your Vote Counts

I have been cynical, at times, in believing my vote wouldn't make a difference. I have also felt, at times, that it didn't matter who is in power. Years ago, I came to realize that the only way we can affect the direction of our country is to participate in the process.

**Every vote counts.** We send a message to those we elect to office by our interest in the process and by our ballot. Win or lose, we have a responsibility to participate in the process of our democracy.

Over half of the American people neglect their responsibility to vote. Freedom requires effort by every citizen. We cannot defer our responsibility to officials elected by *some*, then fail to oversee their performance. Voting is a responsibility that has to be taken seriously by every citizen in a free nation.

I am encouraging everyone to register to vote. If getting to the polls is difficult, you can request an absentee ballot, so you can vote by mail. There is nothing difficult about voting.

How do you know who to vote for in an election? We need to look at more than a pleasing personality, popularity, and an ability to sound good. We need to look at the background of our candidates.

Check the background on candidates for their experience. *You decide if they deserve your vote.* You can have someone check the voting record on the Internet for each political candidate. You can read newspaper articles on the issues of the day to choose topics to discuss.

Participating in your government only requires that you know what values we should have as a people looking out for our fellow citizens, know who votes those values in congress; and support the candidates who reflect your values.

I encourage every citizen to discuss the pressing issues of our time. Today, we are faced with many new challenges such as: a world economy driven by corporate greed, a shrinking middle class, an increase in poverty, and terrorist threats. The challenges to the middle class and the working poor will require strong leadership. I believe that there is *a disconnect in Washington D.C. from the majority of the people.*

You can organize a family or neighborhood meeting to discuss current issues that affect your life. Find out who the senators are for your state. Check to see who the congressional representative is for your district. Then—ask questions and demand answers.

You can make political discussions interesting. If you set rules that everyone is heard without interruption and keep an open mind until everyone expresses his or her views, you will be better informed while participating in the political process.

We have to support Senators and State Representatives who are concerned about unfair trade agreements, tax reform and social security. We need to support government leaders who are concerned with the increased job out-sourcing crisis we face as a nation.

The men and women seeking re-election have a public record of their votes on legislation affecting the lives of the American people. You can view the voting records on the Internet and write to your House Representatives and your Senators. Today with the Internet, you can e-mail your concerns to government leaders. You can write to U.S. Senators from neighboring states as well.

I strongly suggest that the American people start an honest dialog with family and friends regarding the men and women representing them in government. How did your government leaders vote on recent trade agreements? How did your representative vote on the legislation regarding the credit card industry?

How do you feel about tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans when the nation's debt is at record levels? You can send a message to your elected officials with your vote.

Your views are just as important as the views of corporate heads and special interest groups, but not if you don't make them known, and express them and participate!

We cannot defer our responsibility to protect and preserve our government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." **It is ours. Every single one of us.**

**The government, which was designed for the people, has got into the hands of the bosses and their employers, the special interests. An invisible empire has been set up above the forms of democracy**

President Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924)

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