

November 16, 2016

Dear Friends,

The upset victory of Donald Trump was a big surprise, even to Trump's team. Yet it was no surprise.

History sometimes accelerates in a dizzying way to catch up with trends beneath the surface. Over the past few decades, the social relationships underpinning the post-war order have been slowly eroding. The crash of 2008 illuminated the fact that our standard of living had been primarily debt-fueled in recent years.

The people who voted for Trump are expressing their deep needs and a sense of being left behind, of being excluded, their voices unheard, by the trends of neoliberal globalization and other market forces that stomped on them.

This is a bipartisan tide. Bernie Sanders showed there were similar levels of discontent on the Democratic side of the aisle.

Overall, the message of the election was that we have lackluster, uninspiring leadership on all sides, not up to the deep challenges we face.

Dramatic as this all is, I have maintained all year that the outcome of the election would not affect the central tasks of the Right Care Alliance. I continue to believe this. Building a culture of Right Care, developing ideas, initiatives and actions to realize our vision for a safe effective affordable and just health care system was always going to be a big challenge under either Clinton or Trump.

However, though we need to treat him as we would any President, it would be foolish not to recognize that we are at a massive inflection point, and that we face the possibility of a very different world and a very different America. The environment for health care policy has obviously changed radically.

The shortcomings of the Affordable Care Act, most of them predictable, are going to be used to roll back progress in coverage. Mr. Trump and the Republican leadership have reaffirmed in recent days that their plans are to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, to challenge *Rowe v Wade*, and to radically alter Medicare. They will also likely end the expansion of Medicaid states and probably contract benefits in the states that have it.

Now that Trump is President — the fact that millions of Americans placed their trust in him means we have to help them hold him to account -- to the same standard as we would any leader. That means we will have to take Mr. Trump's economic and health care policies seriously and engage with them.

We will have to compare his words to his deeds, and to be very critical of favors to his billionaire buddies, since crony capitalism has been a bipartisan problem. When his deeds betray words and promises, we will have to call them out. We will have to be resolute in opposing any racist and misogynist messaging and policies.

The toxic brew of conditions that elected Trump has now made healthcare one of the central national issues of the coming year. This is not a moment for timidity. This is not a time for retiring into our work and our families, for ignoring events around us.

We must lift up our voices, as doctors and nurses, pharmacists and physician assistants, to express the commitment of our professions to serve, and above all, to speak of compassion and caring, for patients, family, and community.

We have every intention of influencing this emerging conversation and ensuring that for once, the values that brought us all together -- values that protect the public safety, ensure that science undergirds modern medicine, put patients before profits, and ensure that financing gives all Americans access to care they need -- that these values dominate the conversation.

In the past year, we have laid the foundation for this type of engagement. Now it is time to build on it. And fast.

In the weeks and months ahead, we will be sharing more of our plans for moving forward in the new environment we face. More than we planned, we will be monitoring developments in Washington and will be asking you to help us build the movement on a massive scale.

The health of the people will only be secured by all of us. We are rolling up our sleeves. We know you are too. We look forward to working with you.

In solidarity,

Vikas Saini
President, Lown Institute