



Joe Biden has won the presidency with a landslide – 306 electoral votes. Those votes represent over 77 million Americans, many of them first-time voters, who decided that we as a nation deserved more than four more years of the divisiveness, bigotry, and anti-government sentiment that characterizes the Trump administration. With a margin of over five million more votes, the election was a firm statement that American voters want discussion of differences, not violent suppression of them, and solutions to crises, not a president who ignores them.

That pales in comparison to the election of Senator Kamala Harris to the vice presidency. That is another historic event: a Black and Indian woman elected to the second-highest office in the land. America is a diverse country; it is past time that our highest offices reflect that diversity. The election of Vice President Kamala Harris sends a powerful message that in our country there is a place for everyone.

We expect that the road ahead will have challenges, but we know that the Biden administration will listen to us. We know that Betsy DeVos will be replaced with an educator – one of the people in consideration for Secretary of Education is AFT President Randi Weingarten! Imagine, after four years of fighting off privatization, a worsening student debt crisis, a weakening of Title IX protections and other steps backwards, having a champion for public education in the Cabinet. Imagine a Secretary of Labor who believes in working people and workers' rights – Bernie Sanders wants that job, and we know he'd be good at it. Imagine not having to worry about your healthcare, because the Biden/Harris administration understands what the Affordable Care Act means to Americans, and is intent on strengthening it, not removing it.

This is the quality that marks the incoming administration: doing the right thing for all of us. The campaign slogan was "Build Back Better", and it's clear that the pandemic and the economy will be priorities. AFT Washington has said all along that we can't go back to "normal" because normal didn't work for too many Americans. It didn't work for BIPOC communities who have suffered disparately the health and economic impacts of the pandemic on top of the wealth and income disparity that has always existed. It didn't work for working people who don't have the job security, wages and benefits that come with union membership. It didn't work for the millions of potential students who couldn't afford post-high school education or students who took on enormous debt to earn a degree. It didn't work for students with disabilities who lacked appropriate supports so they could receive an education. The old normal didn't work for many people, and it cannot come back. The Biden/Harris administration's platform speaks to our concerns and they will, indeed, Build Back Better.

Our work is not done. We have won a huge victory by voting out fascism. Now we must help flip the Senate and then add our voices to the chorus calling to build back better, as the Biden campaign promised.