

## *5 pieces worth reading*

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### **How to use the debt ceiling to inflict cruelty on the poor**

David Firestone argues in this *New York Times* article that House Republicans are targeting millions of low-income Americans who depend on the federal government for health care and basic nutrition in their proposal to cut federal spending for those programs, as their central demand for voting to raise the nation's debt ceiling. Republicans have argued that those receiving these benefits are "couch potatoes," but those allegations are baseless, as the vast majority of individuals receiving assistance from these programs are working or are unable to work. Firestone contends that President Biden should stand his ground and not accept any cuts in allocations to federal safety net programs to raise the nation's debt ceiling.

Firestone, D. (2023, May 17). "How to use the debt ceiling to inflict cruelty on the poor." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/17/opinion/debt-ceiling-republicans-poor.html>

### **The Republican embrace of vigilantism is no accident**

*New York Times* columnist Jamelle Bouie argues that today's Republican Party support of anyone who uses lethal violence against a perceived antagonist, particularly in the high-profile cases of Kyle Rittenhouse and Daniel Perry, highlights that group's collective view that any level of violence against a left-wing protestor is justified on its face. Bouie contends that this stance is inimical to civil rights and the rule of law and is in fact a textbook definition of vigilantism.

Bouie, J. (2023, May 16). "The Republican embrace of vigilantism is no accident." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/16/opinion/neely-penny-perry-rittenhouse-desantis.html>

### **Ron DeSantis's immigration law is already leading to worker shortages**

Christian Paz argues in this *Vox* commentary that Florida Governor Ron DeSantis's strong support for that state's new law that mandates that businesses with 25 or more employees verify the citizenship status of their workers or face stiff penalties is wrongheaded as that policy is already negatively affecting his state's economy. Florida is home to approximately 800,000

*Ut Prosim (That I may Serve)*

undocumented immigrants, and many work in businesses affected by the new statute. In particular, businesses that employ large numbers of migrant laborers could see a significant share of their workers leave Florida and it is unclear where those firms could obtain replacement employees.

Paz, C. (2023, May 17). “Ron DeSantis’s immigration law is already leading to worker shortages.” *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2023/5/17/23725952/ron-desantis-immigration-law-florida>

### **When students don’t understand history, what are democracy’s chances?**

In this piece in the *Los Angeles Times* Nicholas Goldberg discusses an alarming trend recently highlighted by a Department of Education report— a substantial drop in younger students’ knowledge of U.S. history, combined with a decline in their overall civic knowledge. Goldberg critiques the often-expressed view that history and civics are not important as compared, say, to knowledge of STEM subjects, arguing that democracy cannot continue to exist in the United States without informed and engaged citizens.

Goldberg, N. (2023, May 15). “When students don’t understand history, what are democracy’s chances?” *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-05-15/u-s-history-civics-national-assessment-of-educational-progress>

### **Thai voters choose democracy in a stunning election**

*Vox* reporter Li Zhou discusses the pro-democracy Move Forward Party’s and Pheu Thai’s stunning victory in recent elections in Thailand, a major blow to the military, which had backed incumbents. The military has had a stranglehold on Thai politics for nearly two decades, following coups in 2006 and 2014. This outcome suggests that the country’s citizens want a larger role in their governance. Zhou suggests that this result could also have echo effects in nearby neighboring countries in Southeast Asia that are now also suffering under military rule of various stripes.

Zhou, L. (2023, May 15). “Thai voters choose democracy in a stunning election.” *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/politics/2023/5/15/23724403/thailand-election-results-2023-pro-democracy-military-rule>