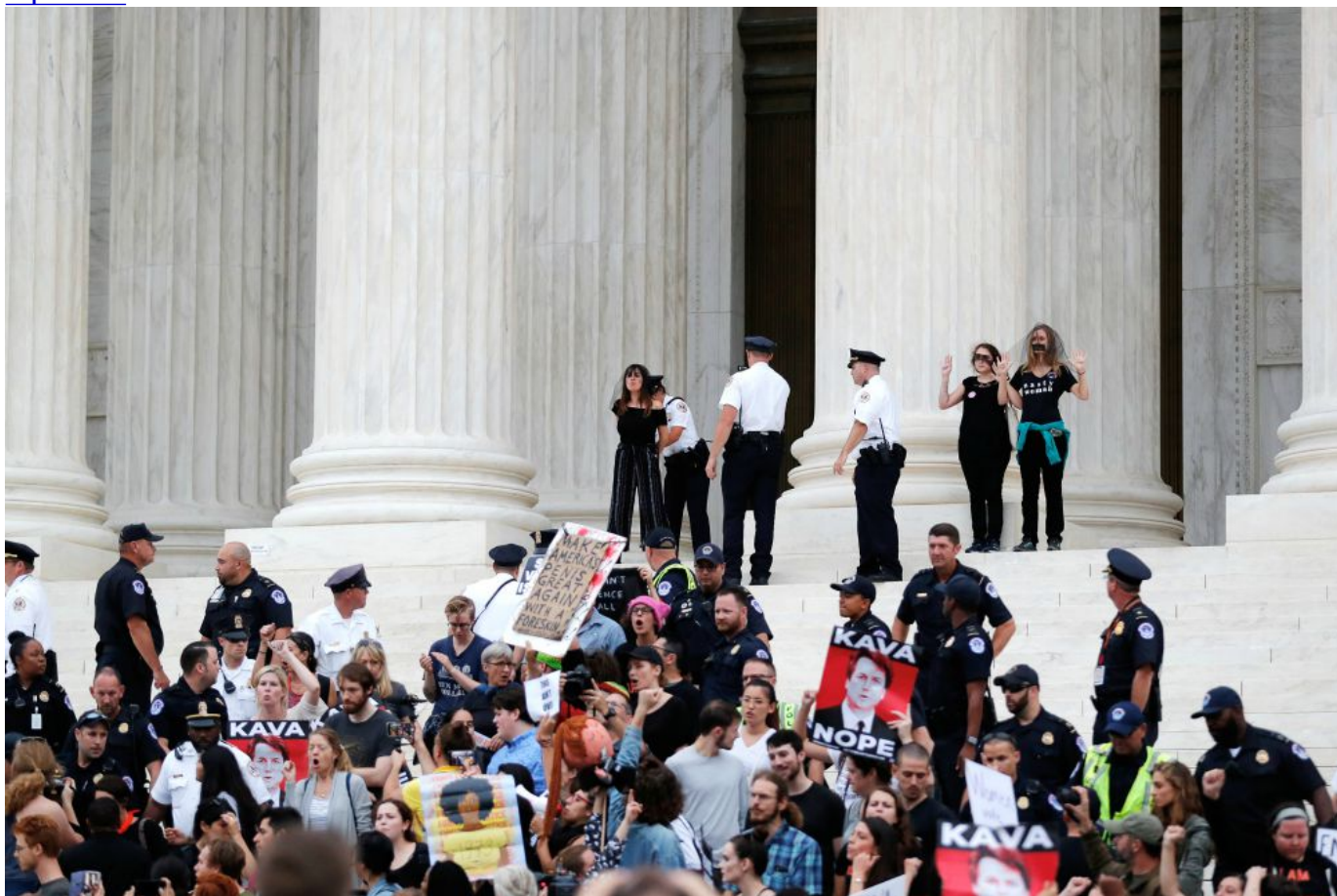


[Opinion](#)



U.S. Capitol police arrest a protester Oct. 6 ahead of the U.S. Senate vote on the confirmation of court nominee Judge Brett Kavanaugh. The Catholic judge became the newest associate justice of the Supreme Court when he was sworn in the evening of Oct. 6. (CNS/Reuters/Jonathan Ernst)



by Pat Perriello

[View Author Profile](#)
perriello@aol.com

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

October 8, 2018

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

It turns out White House counselor Kellyanne Conway may well have been right when she [introduced the concept](#) of "alternative facts."

[Millions of viewers](#) were glued to their TV screens and listened attentively to the confirmation hearings for then Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh. Yet, apparently, they saw two different hearings. The same testimony was perceived very differently by those who watched.

This country remains thoroughly divided, and once again each tribe saw what it wanted to see. I have spoken with people on both sides of the issue and have found little common ground among them. It is true that most viewers found Dr. Christine Blasey Ford's testimony compelling and credible, but there any [semblance of agreement ends](#). Republicans, while careful not to blame Dr. Ford, found the entire exercise a conspiracy by Democrats to deny Judge Kavanaugh a seat on the Supreme Court. Democrats found the accuser believable and saw the accusations as disqualifying.

While the GOP was outraged at what they saw as character assassination, the Democrats believed the accusations pointed out flaws in Kavanaugh's character. Republicans saw the delay in coming forward with these charges a sign of an attempt to "do anything" to stop this confirmation. At the same time, Democrats felt they had been protecting Dr. Ford's desire for anonymity and aren't sure how the allegations were leaked.

Republicans find Kavanaugh's testimony believable and his outrage appropriate given the circumstances. Democrats doubt Kavanaugh's credibility and find his aggressive testimony and openly partisan attacks evidence of a lack of judicial temperament, which should have placed his confirmation in jeopardy.

Republicans were dismayed that the committee would consider accusations from Kavanaugh's high school and college days. They saw efforts to attack yearbook entries as unfair. They saw many of the allegations made as not serious. Democrats saw a pattern of behavior that raised questions. They saw the hearings as a job

interview and not a criminal inquiry. They wondered why this candidate had to be confirmed with what seemed to be a cloud over his head, when so many other qualified candidates were available.

They pointed out that there was no suggestion of inappropriate behavior during the [confirmation hearings](#) for Neil Gorsuch.

Now that Judge Kavanaugh has been confirmed, his supporters are dancing in the streets. Those who opposed his nomination are marching in the streets.

Advertisement

Beyond the confirmation of this one judge, however, remains the question of what happens now. Is there any way to bridge this gap? While President Donald Trump did not create this polarized country, he has clearly fed the flames. He has eschewed any efforts to bring people together; instead he has chosen to highlight differences and use cultural and ideological divides to his advantage.

What is needed is someone who can begin the process of bringing a divided nation together again in the 2020 election. We need to pray that a figure will emerge who can be trusted by all sides, and who, hopefully, can reverse the damage done by this president. Currently, there is no apparent candidate available to fill that need.

The present divisions in our country are not sustainable. It is not just the people of the heartland divided against the people on the coasts. It is husband and wife; families; friends and communities that are being ripped apart.

Now is a time for serious contemplation of these realities. The nation has its first opportunity to take a step forward in seeking a more perfect union during the upcoming mid-term elections. I believe all Americans, regardless of party, should want a more balanced government. As we have seen, when one party controls all the levers of power in Washington, it contributes to even greater divisiveness and hostility.

At a critical time in our nation's past, a president (quoting the Bible) said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." We are in such a critical time now. The future will determine whether this house, this democracy, will continue to stand.

[Pat Perriello, a retired educator from the Baltimore City Public Schools, served as the coordinator of Guidance and Counseling Services and an associate professor at Johns Hopkins University. He is a former seminarian from St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore.]