



*An urgent call for rational thinking and leadership
in the service of American democracy*

How America Lost Its Mind

*The Assault on Reason That's
Crippling Our Democracy*

By Thomas E. Patterson

Americans are losing touch with reality. On virtually every issue, from climate change to immigration, tens of millions of Americans have opinions and beliefs wildly at odds with fact, rendering them unable to think sensibly about politics. In *How America Lost Its Mind*, Thomas E. Patterson explains the rise of a world of “alternative facts” and the slow-motion cultural and political calamity unfolding around us.

We don't have to search far for the forces that are misleading us and tearing us apart: politicians for whom division is a strategy; talk show hosts who have made an industry of outrage; news outlets that wield conflict as a marketing tool; and partisan organizations and foreign agents who spew disinformation to advance a cause, make a buck, or simply amuse themselves. The consequences are severe. *How America Lost Its Mind* maps a political landscape convulsed with distrust, gridlock, brinksmanship, petty feuding, and deceptive messaging.

As dire as this picture is, and as unlikely as immediate relief might be, Patterson sees a way forward and underscores its urgency. A call to action, his book encourages us to wrest institutional power from ideologues and disruptors and entrust it to sensible citizens and leaders, to restore our commitment to mutual tolerance and restraint, to cleanse the Internet of fake news and disinformation, and to demand a steady supply of trustworthy and relevant information from our news sources.

As philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote decades ago, the rise of demagogues is abetted by “people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, true and false, no longer exists.” In *How America Lost Its Mind*, Thomas Patterson makes a passionate case for fully and fiercely engaging on the side of truth and mutual respect in our present arms race between fact and fake, unity and division, civility and incivility.

Thomas E. Patterson is Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He is the author of numerous articles and award-winning books, including *Informing the News*, *The Vanishing Voter*, *Out of Order*, *The Mass Media Election*, and *The Unseeing Eye*.

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