



# OPINION: THE HONORABLE MR. PENCE - RICH LOWRY

*Posted on August 12, 2023 by Rich Lowry*



Mike Pence, after about seven years of campaigning with Donald Trump, serving with Trump, and showing as much deference as could possibly be expected to Trump, is now officially "liddle."

Donald Trump finally issued a complete denunciation of his former vice president, who now has been downgraded all the way to Marco Rubio-circa-2016 territory.

Pence becomes the highest official to have disappointed Trump with his supposed poor judgment and low character -- a status that Pence will maintain until such time Trump is elected president again and inevitably let down by everyone around him, up to and including his next vice president.

The latest Jack Smith indictment has intensified the breach between Pence and Trump created by Jan. 6.

Pence got to the crux of the matter in saying that the indictment was a reminder that "anyone who puts himself over the Constitution should never be president of the United States," and Trump got to the crux of the matter in saying that Pence has embraced the "Dark Side," is "delusional," wants "to show he's a tough guy," was once the subject of a negative "major magazine article," and is, of course, *liddle*.

In political terms, this showdown can't be good news for Pence. On paper, he should have been positioned to inherit at least an element of the Trump base and add Republicans who are more traditional for a competitive primary coalition.

This possibility got blown up by Trump's pressure campaign to get the former vice president to do his bidding on Jan. 6.

Pence did the honorable and constitutionally correct thing, and his reward has been Trump's inveighing against him on that day, declining approval ratings in the party, and now the row with Trump that will further push Pence into the minority non-Trump wing of the party.

Pence didn't even get praised much by left-of-center commentators after Jan. 6 because he has remained a dyed-in-the-wool conservative, and they'll never forgive him for being Trump's vice president in the first place.

Many still have the attitude that Pence has basically gotten what he deserves and should have known things with Trump would end badly.

Pence's choices, though, were reasonable ones.

When Trump came to him about the vice presidency in 2016, he had already sewed up the nomination -- nothing Pence could do, including declining to join the ticket, was going to change that.

During the administration, he played an important role as the chief internal advocate of social conservatives and also was a healthy

influence on the president.



The fact that he was the one in the crucible on Jan. 6 and that he had the conscience and backbone to do the right thing should be enough, in and of itself, to vindicate his decision to serve.

Should we discount what he did on that day since it was simply what was expected of any person in that role? Well, maybe, but when their career is on the line, politicians have a way of finding a way to defend the indefensible or wiggle out of a tough choice. Pence didn't waver.

Now, the explosive indictment gives Pence, even if he were inclined to do otherwise, no choice but to robustly defend his historic role at the sorry end of the administration he served so loyally.

At a time when Republicans are putting a high value -- at least in their rhetoric -- on speaking the truth and showing courage, Pence is really doing it.

And not over some policy issue -- this isn't like being mispositioned on immigration or entitlement spending. It's a fundamental question that involved the integrity of our constitutional republic.

Trump would never admit as much, of course, but what he needed on Jan. 6 was someone who genuinely was small, who could be intimidated and swayed, and who was willing to put his own selfish interests over and above the constitutional order. What he got instead was Mike Pence.

(Rich Lowry is on Twitter @RichLowry)

(c) 2023 by King Features Syndicate