

## UMass alumni Robert Weiner address issues within American democracy

Weiner spoke on past and present government attacks to democratic values



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On Oct. 6, students, faculty and community members listened to the presentation of political activist and University of Massachusetts alumni Robert “Bob” Weiner. His speech focused on American democracy and the dangerous climate of politics in America.

Weiner graduated from UMass in 1974 with a master’s degree in history, going on to work for the Democratic National Committee. Weiner’s lecture centered on one

main idea: democracy is dying, and has been dying since the beginning of the Civil War.

"We're in the middle of history, and it's not necessarily good," Weiner said. He explained that the Civil War was the start of voter suppression, taking listeners through the history of corrupt political figures that went against the democratic values the government of the United States supposedly stands for.

"Democracy is in real danger, and more than ever since the Civil War," Weiner said. "It could be dying to the point we will not recognize it and other countries will no longer take our lead."

"From the Civil War, to Nixon Watergate, to Ken Starr during Clinton, to Trump, we've back-slided and corrected, back-slided and corrected," he continued. "It's been worse and worse each time, and Biden is the American people's course correction from Trumpism."

Weiner spoke extensively on corruption in the government during the time Donald Trump was President. He addressed the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection, recently recovered documents from Mar-a-Lago, claims that the 2020 election was stolen and other controversial events plaguing the Republican party in the recent past.

Weiner said that the Trump era of politics brought forth a narcissistic, "I-can-do-whatever-I-want" type of politician that resulted in another detrimental blow to American Democracy.

Daniel Gordon, a history professor at UMass, said he agreed with the concerns that Weiner brought up during the event. Gordon felt that students were able to leave the lecture with the incentive to get more involved with current events and politics. "There's a lot of anxiety [over] how our society's functioning," Gordon said. "It's good to bring someone in who has decades of experience in Washington D.C. to try to tell us what he's seen over the long-term... I think the students definitely got the vibe that they should be more involved in tracking the news and active politically, to stand up for their democratic ideals."

Gordon believes, however, that it is hard to navigate this complex problem, and that blaming one portion of the government may not be the right answer.

"I think that we should all be concerned," he said. "I'm just not yet clear on what the best way [of] framing this problem is."

Ashley Picard, junior legal studies and Afro-American studies major, said the event led her to think about politics beyond face value. "There's a lot more to politics than what's just in the news," Picard said. "Also, there is a lot to do with the history of current politicians and current people in power."

“A lot of the people [Weiner] talked about who have been in power for a long time, they’ve done so much on the outside to contribute to what’s going on today,” Picard said.

Weiner ended the speech by leaving the listeners with a piece of advice: “You are the generation that can make a difference. Literally save the country and save our democracy,” he said.

“We have the power to protect this amazing institution, and you have the power to make that happen.”

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