

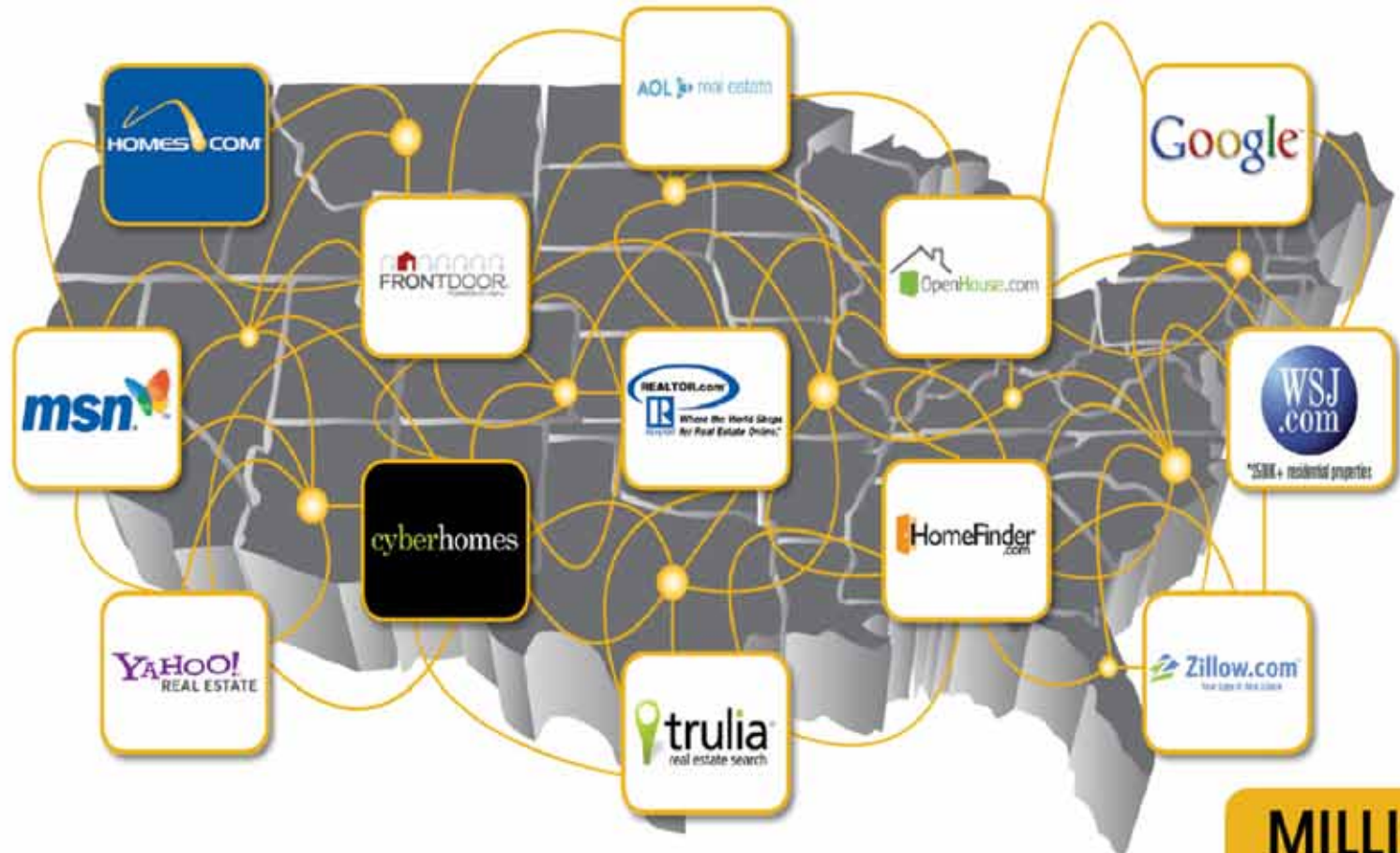




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Trump Needs To Continue Regulation Jihad

By RICK MANNING

Special to the Penny Press

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Director Richard Cordray announced his resignation last week. This is a victory for consumers and

Commentary

businesses, as he will no longer be able to wreak regulatory havoc on the American people and the economy.

But that doesn't mean we are out of the woods just yet. While President Trump continues to successfully roll back Obama-era regulations, he cannot stop midstream in this effort.

Before Cordray is shown the

door out of Washington to pursue what is expected to be a run for Ohio Governor, we need to first look back at the damage he has left in his wake.

Earlier this month, President Trump signed into law a repeal of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's punitive arbitration rule. This regulation was the latest example of how this rogue agency's actions are meant to protect anyone but consumers. While the rule would have made it easier for consumers to sue their bank in the event of a dispute, the reality is that it would have resulted in thousands of lawsuits and hundreds of millions of dollars in costs to banks to protect themselves in litigation, costs which will ultimately be passed onto consumers. What was even more troubling were reports

that by his own admission, Cordray said that many banks don't even have arbitration clauses.

In an Oct. 13 letter to Senate Banking Committee Ranking Member, Sherrod Brown, Cordray said: "roughly half of the credit card market does not have arbitration clauses in their agreements." So, as Darren McKinney of the American Tort Reform Association rightly asked in a recent opinion piece: "how in the world did the CFPB ever conclude it needed to impose itself on a sound and functioning market — a market in which consumers have plenty of choices and banks that don't require arbitration are free to advertise themselves as such?"

It's a great question, and one we now don't have to answer, thanks to Senator Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, Rep.

Keith Rothfus, R-Pa., and others who worked tirelessly in Congress to make sure this rule never saw the light of day. However, there are plenty of other CFPB actions that are harming consumers and businesses as we speak.

Last month, the agency released a 1,700-page rule to regulate short-term loans, which will result in cutting off a critical source of income, especially for unbanked and underbanked Americans that need assistance when a financial emergency or a natural disaster strikes. In a twist of irony, it is the Bureau's own abusive policies that have forced many banks to deny basic services to these consumers.

Additionally, the agency has also been busy building the largest government consumer database by monitoring more than 87 percent

Continued on page 4

The Conservative Weekly

Voice Of Nevada

Inside:

TSA Needs To Get
A Clue, Some Sense

See Editorial Page 6



Penny Wisdom

I do have to say, 40 years is a long time. He's run eight races, and this has never come up. So 40 years is a long time.

—President Trump

RON KNECHT	PAGE 5
FRED WEINBERG	PAGE 6
ROBERT RINGER	PAGE 7
DOUG FRENCH	PAGE 9
PRINTUS LeBLANC	PAGE 10
ROBERT ROMANO	PAGE 11
CHUCK MUTH	PAGE 14

Removing Obama Zombie Regulators...

Continued from page 3

of the credit card market, even while Cordray has admitted he can't guarantee the data the CFPB has collected is 100 percent secure. After the devastating data beaches at Wells Fargo and more recently Equifax, the last thing the CFPB should be in the business of doing is collecting such large amounts of sensitive and unprotected data. It's clear from Cordray's actions that the CFPB is more concerned about using taxpayer dollars to protect and promote Cordray than to protect American consumers.

So, while 143 million Americans just had their personal information exposed by the reckless actions of Equifax, the CFPB was busy completing a \$145 million building makeover.


Richard Cordray should have never been working on the public dime

in the first place. Last month, my group released a Halloween themed ad calling on Trump to remove Obama-era "zombie" regulators like Cordray, because the longer he stayed as head of the CFPB, the more damage he could inflict on the American people and undermine the Trump agenda.

Now that Cordray is gone, much work remains to undo what he did in office. Mick Mulvaney certainly has the proven steady hand to right the agency's ship. In the meantime, Congress needs to continue to use the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to undo the incredible damage the CFPB has already inflicted on taxpayers and the economy, and ultimately they need to put an end to this Dodd-Frank regulatory monstrosity altogether.

Rick Manning is President of Americans for Limited Government.

Bill Clinton's day of reckoning coming?



When I said, "You can fool some of the people all the time," I was just fooling.

Commentary: Ron Knecht & Geoffrey Lawrence

What We Were Thankful For In 2015

This column appeared here on Thanksgiving 2015

Today we're thankful that the widely despised Commerce Tax is moving toward a Nevada voter referendum.

Acting for the concerned citizens of RIP Commerce Tax, Inc., Ron filed a referendum petition on that tax in October. Tax-hike advocates brought a meritless law suit seeking to deny you a vote on it. RIP filed its answer, and a hearing on the case will be held 9 AM Wednesday, December 2 at Carson City's court house. After defeating this suit, we'll have legions of folks

gathering signatures to put it to a vote next November.

This column summarizes the desperate arguments the plaintiffs made and our answers completely debunking them.

Their suit claims that the referendum, as filed, doesn't address a law or part of one, as required, but only a legislative bill. Perhaps their lawyers were absent when the film, "How a Bill Becomes a Law" was shown in ninth-grade civics class.

Our petition's text was taken directly from Senate Bill 483, the omnibus tax package passed by both houses of the Legislature, enrolled and signed by the Governor. Plaintiffs suggest that the signed bill is not law and so we must wait for a text of the law until legislative staff publishes the next edition of the statutes.

The text we used is exactly

the law in effect since July 1 that creates the Commerce Tax. If it's not literally the law, then the state has no legal basis to require anyone to pay this tax or others in SB483, as it's already doing. So, our petition truly seeks a referendum on part of a statute.

They also allege that our text addresses administrative details that aren't legislative matters subject to referendum. They cite definitions ("business," "Taxable year," etc.) and procedural provisions of the law, plus some court cases. But they also repeatedly quote court decisions that the legislative power of the people is "coequal, coextensive and concurrent with that of the Legislature."

The referendum definitions and other details are inherently legislative matters. Calling them "administrative" doesn't change that. If they aren't legislative, then the Legislature didn't have the power to include them in SB483. And since the Legislature's power exactly equals the people's power in this matter, we have a right to vote on the whole Commerce Tax text.

Their lawyers also err in construing the cases they cite here: Those cases involve local governments exercising simultaneously legislative and non-legislative administrative powers. Nevada courts have held that referenda may address only legislative matters. But since Nevada's Legislature has only legislative (not administrative) powers, if it has the power to legislate these details (as it does), then her people have the power to repeal them.

Their complaint also challenges the required brief description of the effect of our referendum as being confusing and misleading.

Our description is conspicuously clear and accurate. In accord with Nevada's constitution, it says that a yes vote means the Commerce Tax is retained and can't be changed except by future voter action. A no vote means it is repealed. Period.

Notably, they didn't claim our referendum violates the single-subject rule. It encompasses all Commerce Tax provisions and only those.

Finally, they claim that, by cutting state revenues, a Commerce Tax repeal would violate Nevada's constitutional requirement for a balanced budget. That challenge is untimely before the election because voters could approve the tax, meaning no reduction in revenues.

But assuming voters repeal it – as they defeated four-to-one last November a margins tax akin to it – there's no problem. Shortly after the repeal, the Governor will present his proposed budget to the next Legislature. Commerce Tax revenues will already have been collected for the current biennium, so legislators will merely have to balance the next budget, per usual.

Arguably, their suit seeks to enlist Nevada's judiciary in their ongoing crusade to keep the people from ever voting on taxes. In 2003, many of these folks conned six Nevada justices into making a political decision supporting the then-proposed Gross Receipts Tax. That led to voter rejection or retirement of all six of them. Later, the Supreme Court overturned its legendarily awful decision.

We doubt a Nevada judge or justice today would make a similarly bad decision.

**RON KNECHT and
GEOFFREY LAWRENCE**



Tips Of Our Cap and Bronx Cheers

The Penny Press Tips Its Cap To:

Almost all of Hollywood. Watching these clowns "apologize" for their "missteps" with female employees if actually better entertainment than their movies and TV shows. It's as if last week they all became Christian Scientists and this week, they all came down with appendicitis. It's not really a left or right thing. It's a we'll never take these clowns seriously again thing.

Nevada prison inmate Scott Dozier, who doesn't care if he dies in pain. He just wants to die. The condemned Las Vegas murderer, whose execution has been put on hold, recently penned a 1½-page cry for death to District Judge Jennifer Togliatti. In the letter, he asked her to rescind an order that eliminated a paralytic drug from the state's lethal injection protocol. He may be a better citizen than the judge.

The Penny Press Sends A Bronx Cheer And A Bouquet of Weeds To:

The United States Congress for keeping a slush fund for paying off former employees who have been sexually harassed by its members and keeping the payoffs secret! If you ever wonder why Congress has an approval rating which is so low that even their mothers don't like them, this is Congress on display. They should all be ashamed of themselves.

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OPINION

From The Publisher...

Memo To The TSA: Get A Clue

Let me write about something this week which is only peripherally related to politics but are central to our economy.

When I left for Dallas last Sunday, I had to go through the TSA Pre-check lane at Reno-Tahoe International Airport before I got on the Southwest 737-700 which was flying to Dallas Love Field.

As I walked through the metal detector, the sounder went off.

"Oh," said the young lady. "You have been randomly selected for further screening."

For the third time that month in Reno.

That's NOT my definition of "random". Or, for that matter, any mathematician I know.

So, I stopped and asked a supervisor about it. In that I have never been "selected" for further screening at Phoenix, Chicago Midway, Dallas Love or Minneapolis, I naturally had some questions.

"Well," he said, "we're a lot smaller airport than those places so you're going to get picked more."

So, let me get this straight.

While most Americans are worried about sexual harassment claims (just kidding), the Federal Government is so worried that terrorists are going to board a flight in Reno, Nevada and slip past the Pre-Check inspection lane where there are background checks in place for those of us who have a Trusted Traveler Number.

And you wonder why people have so little faith in the Federal Government.

Here's an idea. Give the operations of the program to the folks who run Southwest Airlines.

Southwest CEO Gary Kelly and his team are some of the few managers who actually know how to move large numbers of people through the country efficiently and there is more collective intelligence in his executive offices at Love Field in Dallas than in the entire TSA.

The fact is that the TSA has never stopped a terrorist event

in the United States. What it does is provide eye candy for the traveling public.

In the early days after the events of 9-11, the occasional travelers were willing to put up with it under the assumption that the TSA was guarding them from al Qaeda. Those of us who spend as much time traveling as in our office knew better then and know better now.

The general public has now also caught on.

Let me be clear. Security is necessary. But we deserve the best security, not the illusion of the best security. Most often, that means applying common sense to the problem.

Seriously?

You want us to believe that because Reno is smaller than Dallas, Chicago, Phoenix and Minneapolis we should be treated with a higher expectation of terror activity or criminality?

Or maybe we should believe that someone has a clever idea that more inspections mean more justification for more people. Kind of like the teachers' union wanting a smaller class size.

One more thing.

When the pre-check was created, it was never anticipated that those lines would be longer than the regular line. Yet, many times, it is because they are sending people through that line who have NOT submitted to background checks.

Which is another reason that people are skeptical about the government.

There is a procedure in place to get pre-check. If, instead of asking people to submit to a background check, give fingerprints and pay \$85, they give it away like candy at Halloween, it's a good time to ask exactly why they feel a need to load up that line.

My guess is that if they were forced to give an answer, it would be as convincing as was the IRS' when it came to issuing tax exemptions for conservative groups.

Memo to the TSA: Get a clue.

FRED WEINBERG

Commentary: Robert Ringer

The Under-Water Myth

What do the Dirty Dems' victories last Tuesday mean for the upcoming 2018 elections? Answer: NOTHING!

First of all, New Jersey is a hopelessly blue state and Virginia has been moving rapidly in that direction for some time, which is why I have repeatedly warned readers that I was skeptical the race in Virginia was as close as some pollsters claimed. The plain fact is that Northeast Virginia is a liberal-elite extension of D.C., not just geographically but ideologically.

Second, Ed Gillespie is a classic establishment gentleman, having served as White House Counselor to George W. Bush and head of the Republican National Committee. Not that long ago, such credentials would have been impressive, but in today's populist environment they are actually liabilities.

Even so, Gillespie might have had a better chance if he had not insulted the intelligence of Republican voters by playing the wishy-washy, finger-in-the-wind game. By trying to distance himself from President Trump while at the same time laboring to convince voters that he agreed with Trump's policies, he became devoid of credibility. So much so that he lost the Virginia governor's race by a greater margin than Trump lost to Hillary.

In other words, last Tuesday's elections went pretty much as expected, which is why I was surprised (but should not have been) that the Dirty Dems and their media allies immediately started insisting that the GOP losses in Virginia and New Jersey constituted a backlash against President Trump and signified the beginning of the end of the populist movement.

Many of the media comments were embarrassingly over the top, with FNM cretins declaring the Democratic victories as no less than a triumph of good over evil. Even Fox News establishment talking-pointer Steve Hayes couldn't stop reminding everyone how seriously "under water" Donald Trump was. The guy is so shielded from reality inside the Beltway bubble that he doesn't understand that the drumbeating about Trump's disapproval ratings is nothing more than wishful thinking on the part of Democrats and their media allies.

I guess it's possible Trump could lose in 2020, but if he does, it won't be because of his approval/disapproval ratings. When pundits gloat about Trump's ratings, they are looking at them in a vacuum; i.e., they don't take into account Trump's ratings in each individual state. It's a delusional view which implies that the electoral college is irrelevant and that all that counts is the popular vote.

Calling all Dirty Dems: The fact is that Trump can afford to lose California, New York, and Illinois by 20 million votes and it still wouldn't matter. This is precisely what the Founding Fathers had in mind when they ingeniously came up with the idea of basing election results on the electoral college.

What all this means is that the Radical Left folks are still in a state of denial. They don't want to face the reality that people in the thirty states Trump won still emphatically reject the idea of being ruled by gun-grabbing, single-payer loving, politically correct, violence-prone leftists who populate the Obama-Hillary states.

That said, I continue to believe that Republicans will pick up a number of seats in the House in 2018 and perhaps six or seven seats in the Senate. There's also a good chance that in 2020 Trump will lose the popular vote by an even greater margin than in 2016, yet still win the election.

If I'm right about this, it's likely to put the entire Democratic Party on suicide watch. These people are not only immoral, they're also dumb as rocks. As hard as it is for normal folks to understand, they are

physiologically and psychologically incapable of acknowledging reality.

Which brings me to Bush 41 and Bush 43, both of whom were just fine with a Marxist president carrying out his promise to fundamentally transform the United States of America. That's right, nary a word of dissent during eight years of Barack Obama's anti-American policies.

They had no problem with Barack Obama running up more debt than all other U.S. presidents combined.

They had no problem with Barack Obama making purposely divisive statements like "We're gonna punish our enemies and we're gonna reward our friends" and "If they bring a knife to the fight, we bring a gun."

They had no problem with Barack Obama chiming in on local homicides like Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Freddie Gray and being proven wrong every time.

They had no problem with Barack Obama politicizing the Justice Department day in and day out.

They had no problem with the Benghazi scandal, the spread of ISIS or Obama's apology tours.

They had no problem with Barack Obama being caught on a hot mic telling Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, "After my election I have more flexibility." To which Medvedev responded, "I understand. I will transmit this information to Vladimir."

Well, George 41 and George 43, let me clue you on the worst-kept secret in the world: Barack Obama was the most corrupt president in U.S. history! Got it?

Does all this mean I believe the Bushes are bad people? In the general sense of the word, no, I don't believe the word bad applies to them. They are decent human beings who are simply committed to doing everything they can to keep the status quo, so committed that they are blinded to the reality that the aim of the Dirty Dems is to destroy any Republican who stands in the way of their achieving their Marxist agenda.

Worst of all, because of their flawed vision, they sincerely believe it is right and proper to make nice to the Dirty Dems. This is more a perversity than a sin. It's also stupidity. But regardless of what it is, the bottom line is that, in their own way, Republicans like the Bushes do more damage to America than those in the Radical Left by offering no resistance to the latter's tyranny.

Having said all this, I would argue that it's not Trump who is under water. It's the failed and cowardly policies of establishment Republicans cheered on by hopeless globalists like the Bushes, that are under water.

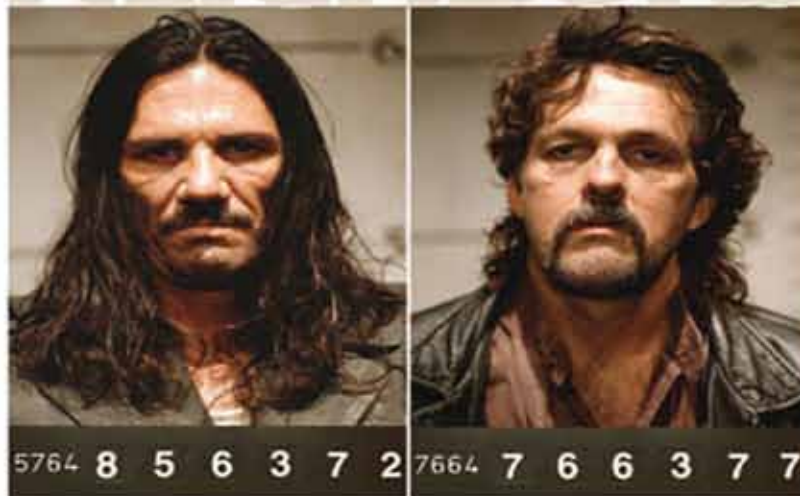
Bush Republicans long ago lost the battle for the soul of working Americans, but, incredible as it may seem, they don't even know it. Which is why the 2018 midterms and 2020 presidential election will be even more traumatic for them than the 2016 seismic jolt from which they have not yet recovered.

And might I add that it couldn't happen to a more deserving group of people.

ROBERT RINGER

Robert Ringer (© 2017) is a New York Times #1 bestselling author who has appeared on numerous national radio and television shows, including The Tonight Show, Today, The Dennis Miller Show, Good Morning America, ABC Nightline, The Charlie Rose Show, as well as Fox News and Fox Business. To sign up for a free subscription to his mind-expanding daily insights, visit www.robertringer.com.

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Commentary: Doug French

College: Intolerance and a Waste of Money

Just what is being accomplished on university campuses? Is anyone learning anything or are US universities just indoctrination camps? John Ellis writes for the Wall Street Journal, “What then is the disease? We are now close to the end of a half-century process by which the campuses have been emptied of centrist and right-of-center voices.”

So, you parents who are conservative or libertarian, you should know, (a) your kids will be preached to in virtually every class from a leftist/collectivist point of view, (b) they really won't learn anything worthwhile that they don't already know, but (c) as a college graduate they will possibly make 70% more than non-graduates. Ellis explains,

“In 1969 the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education found that there were overall about twice as many left-of-center as right-of-center faculty. Various studies document the rise of that ratio to 5 to 1 at the century's end, and to 8 to 1 a decade later, until in 2016 Mitchell Langbert, Dan Klein, and Tony Quain find it in the region of 10 to 1 and still rising.”

It gets worse, Ellis writes,

“In most humanities and social-science departments—especially those central to a liberal education, such as history, English and political science—the share of left-of-center faculty already approaches 100%.”

Since there is no opposition on campus, the professoriate can call anyone who opposes their ideas, “racists,” and “fascists.” Thus, speakers who are not necessarily controversial, like Ben Shapiro, Ann Coulter, Charles Murray, even FEE's Lawrence Reed, are demonized and booed off the stage or forced to cancel their talks due to threats of violence.

Reed attempted to speak to students at the University of Colorado-Denver about the “Lessons from Ancient Rome,” not a topic that should make students grab torches and pitchforks. However, as Reed writes, “What I saw from a minority of radicalized students in the audience, however, was an appalling microcosm of the smug, arrogant, self-righteous, politically-correct, campus insanity that you see on TV with increasing frequency these days.”

Reed is anything but bombastic. He's thoughtful and congenial, but was met with heckling and repeated interruptions from students who went on lengthy diatribes. One student held up a sign that read, “Bullshit!” And when all else failed they accused him of racism.

Again, his speech was about ancient Rome for crying out loud.

Townhall reports that 19% of college students support the use of violence against a speaker they view as controversial (someone who says things they don't agree with). Christine Rouselle writes, “The poll also found that nearly 40 percent of students do not believe that the First Amendment covers “hate speech” (which it does), and that slightly over half of the students surveyed believe that it is okay to shout down a speaker who is making controversial comments so that they cannot be heard.”

Meanwhile, these students who act like they know it all aren't getting a thing out of college, writes Bryan Kaplan in his forthcoming book “The Case Against Education: Why the Education System is a Waste of Time and Money.”

“You need to ask: How often do academics successfully broaden students' horizons? Empirically, the answer is bleak: while great teachers can turn students into Shakespeare fans, Civil War buffs, avant-garde artists, and devoted violinists, such transformations are rare. Despite teachers' best efforts, most youths find high culture boring--and few change their minds in adulthood.”

But employers pay graduates more money. Thus, getting a college degree is a good investment. Kaplan says the reason is signaling. Employers aren't paying for the knowledge gained by the applicant in college but the degree is a signal as to the student's productivity.

The George Mason economics instructor is not trying to convince his readers that no knowledge is gained by students or that a degree's benefit is entirely signaling: Just maybe 80%.

Governments spend a trillion dollars subsidizing education, with the mistaken notion that if everyone has a degree, everyone will make more money. This is a Fallacy of Composition, explains Kaplan, what's true for the part must be true for the whole. Kaplan uses the example of standing at a concert to see better. If you're the only one standing, yes, you see better. But, when everyone else stands with you, your view is no better.

While today's college students are standing, too many are ignorant and intolerant. And, will remain that way.

DOUG FRENCH



Commentary: Printus LeBlanc

Should the President be leery of the Intelligence Community?

Since President Trump took office, there have been multiple reports of friction between the President and the Intelligence Community (IC). This is disconcerting because the President needs the community especially in the tough times we are currently facing, North Korea, Iran, and terrorism. If the people of the IC would take a minute and put themselves in the shoes of the President, they might see why there is friction and that the friction can be fixed.

Most Presidents have either served in the military or were elected officials before becoming the President, therefore they had contact with the intelligence community. President Trump was not in the military nor a politician before deciding to run for the office, therefore he did not have prior interaction with the intelligence community. All the President knew about the IC was what was reported by the media. What were some of the main media stories being pushed by the media about the IC prior to Donald Trump's election?

Before the election

- The mainstream media lambasted the IC for the Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) debacle. The coalition never found the WMD stockpiles or the mobile labs that were the motive for the invasion. The media blamed the Bush administration and the intelligence community.
- Edward Snowden sent shockwaves through Congress when he stole NSA data and gave it to journalists. The data was proof the IC was collecting much more data on the American people than originally thought. Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, even lied about the issue in front of Congress shortly before the Snowden disclosures.
- So, the Media was not painting a pretty picture of the community before and during the election.

After the election

- Before Trump was even sworn in, the Director of the FBI, James Comey confronted the President with the fake Steele dossier. The President believed Comey was attempting to hold the dossier over his head stating, "In my opinion, he shared it so that I would think he had it out there." So, one of the chief intelligence officials in the nation is trying to intimidate the duly elected President.
- In January, the IC claimed his election wasn't legitimate. James Clapper stated, "Our intelligence community assessment did, I think, serve to cast doubt on the legitimacy of his victory in the election." Apparently, Russia made Trump go to Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin while simultaneously telling Clinton to concentrate her time in New York and California. The IC told the President you didn't work as hard as

you think you did, Russia did it.

- Since President Trump has been sworn in, it has been revealed his campaign was spied on by the US intelligence community. We know this because of Michael Flynn. Former acting attorney general Sally Yates, informed the Trump administration about the content of phone calls Flynn had with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak. Former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort was being surveilled under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Manafort was only the campaign manager for two months, but that was apparently long enough to reactivate a long-dormant FISA warrant against him. So now it looks like the intelligence community asking the President to trust them he was spying on him.
- It now appears the IC used research, paid for by the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton, to launch a counterintelligence investigation that has resulted in a special counsel aimed at the President. The document is known as the Steele dossier.
- Multiple committees in Congress are investigating the dossier, the funding, and the sources of the "intelligence" in the dossier, and the FBI is refusing to cooperate. What are they trying to hide?
- Since President Trump was elected an unprecedented number of leaks from the intelligence community has taken place, even personal conversations the President had with world leaders has been leaked. What world leader would have a candid discussion with the President if it were likely to leak the next day to the Washington Post?
- The President has had a plethora of high ranking intelligence officials insulting him. Former CIA director Michael Hayden said, "Trump is Russia's useful fool." James Clapper, the man that lied to Congress, called President Trump's fitness into question.
- If former N. Ambassador Samantha Power is to be believed and she did not do all the unmaskings in her name, then it appears anyone in the IC can unmask American citizens for any reason using false credentials.

Members of the intelligence community should put themselves in the shoes of the President. The President is bombarded with derogatory media reports concerning the community for years. Once he becomes President, the political leadership of the intelligence community bombards him with false allegations. Former heads of intelligence insult him daily, and secrets are being leaked at an epidemic proportion.

How would you feel if you were in his shoes?

Would you trust someone that spied on you?

The good news is, this can be fixed. The President's intelligence chiefs can put professionals in leadership positions and do away with the politicization of intelligence. The FBI can get Congress the requested documents without hesitation and put conspiracy theories to rest. The DOJ can open an investigation into the multiple illegal unmaskings, while continuing the hunt for leaks. The President needs the intelligence community, and the intelligence community needs to get over their hurt feelings, and this needs to happen quickly, for the sake of the nation.

PRINTUS LeBLANC

Printus LeBlanc is a contributing editor at Americans for Limited Government



Commentary: Robert Romano

Was Fusion GPS a Russian Agent, a DNC Agent or Both?

So, let's get this straight.

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the Hillary Clinton campaign hired, via law firm Perkins Coie, Fusion GPS to fund the Christopher Steele dossier that alleged Trump-Russia collusion in the 2016 election to put the DNC emails on Wikileaks.

That same law firm also hired the CrowdStrike company that alleged that Russia intelligence services had hacked the DNC in 2015 and 2016.

Then, we learned that both before and after meeting Donald Trump, Jr. where he was offered "dirt" on Hillary Clinton, Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya was meeting with Fusion GPS CEO Glenn Simpson.

And finally we learned that it was Fusion GPS that had prepared the Clinton "dirt" to offer in the Trump, Jr. meeting, which Trump, Jr. said was garbage. There was nothing there.

The same Fusion GPS-Steele dossier alleged that one-time Trump campaign advisor Carter Page had similarly been offered "a dossier of 'kompromat' the Kremlin possessed on Trump's Democratic presidential rival, Hillary Clinton."

And Special Counsel Robert Mueller recently revealed the guilty plea by former Trump campaign advisor George Papadopoulos for lying to federal investigators about his recollection of being in contact with Russians to receive Hillary Clinton "dirt."

It sure makes the Trump, Jr. meeting look like a setup to create the appearance of Russian collusion by none other than Fusion GPS which was being paid to publish the dossier asserting Trump-Russia collusion.

And it raises the question: Was Fusion GPS reporting on its own concocted Trump-Russia conspiracy? It was reporting on the Trump campaign being offered Hillary Clinton "dirt" at the same time was offering the Trump campaign Hillary Clinton "dirt."

This becomes even more significant because Steele used sources said to be Russian agents and cited those passing the supposed Clinton dossier to the Trump campaign as Russian agents. Did Fusion GPS out itself out as a Russian agent?

William Browder certainly thought Fusion GPS was working for Russia in his Senate testimony when he accused both Fusion and Veselnitskaya of concocting a smear dossier against him. He thought they should have registered as foreign agents with the federal government.

This makes it sound like Fusion GPS was also using Russian agents as sources and were using Russian agents to pass Hillary Clinton "dirt" to Trump campaign officials, including Trump, Jr.

For simply taking the meeting, Trump, Jr. is accused of acting as a Russian agent. It's a scurrilous charge, but even if it had any basis, one would also have to conclude that Veselnitskaya was also a Russian agent.

Then, surely, Fusion GPS would also have to have been acting as a Russian agent because they apparently put her in that meeting and provided her with the Clinton "dirt" that was used to entice the meeting.

So too then must the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary

Clinton campaign, via law firm Perkins Coue, be Russian agents because they retained Fusion GPS in the whole enterprise. Fusion hired Steele, who then paid supposed Russian agents for the material for the Trump dossier.

The FBI, which reportedly offered to pay Steele to continue his work, must also have been acting as Russian agents, since apparently it was okay with continuing to use Steele's Russian agent sources to dig up dirt on Donald Trump.

But wait a second. Are we then to believe that Russia had agreed to work with the DNC-and-Clinton-hired Fusion GPS in a bid to make Trump appear to be a Russian agent? But then was simultaneously working against Clinton and the DNC to put the emails on Wikileaks? What a conspiracy!

There's a disconnect here. On one hand, Fusion GPS appears to be one of the only primary sources used to generate Trump-Russia-Wikileaks collusion allegation in the first place. Even the Hillary Clinton "dirt" that was offered to the Trump campaign appears to have been a setup by Fusion GPS, although it was supposedly tied back to Russian agents. Yet, Fusion GPS and Steele also cited Russian agents as their sources for the claim that the Trump campaign and Russia colluded to put the emails on Wikileaks.

According to CrowdStrike, whoever took the DNC emails had gone through efforts to conceal their tracks. CrowdStrike co-founder Dmitri Alperovitch's original statement to the Washington Post published June 14, 2016 cited a lack of evidence as to how it was that somebody got onto the DNC servers to get the emails that were ultimately published on Wikileaks in July 2016.

"CrowdStrike is not sure how the hackers got in. The firm suspects they may have targeted DNC employees with 'spearphishing' emails... 'But we don't have hard evidence,' Alperovitch said," the report stated.

Nor was Alperovitch really sure who had hacked the DNC emails: "CrowdStrike is less sure of whom Cozy Bear works for but thinks it might be the Federal Security Service, or FSB, the country's powerful security agency, which was once headed by Putin."

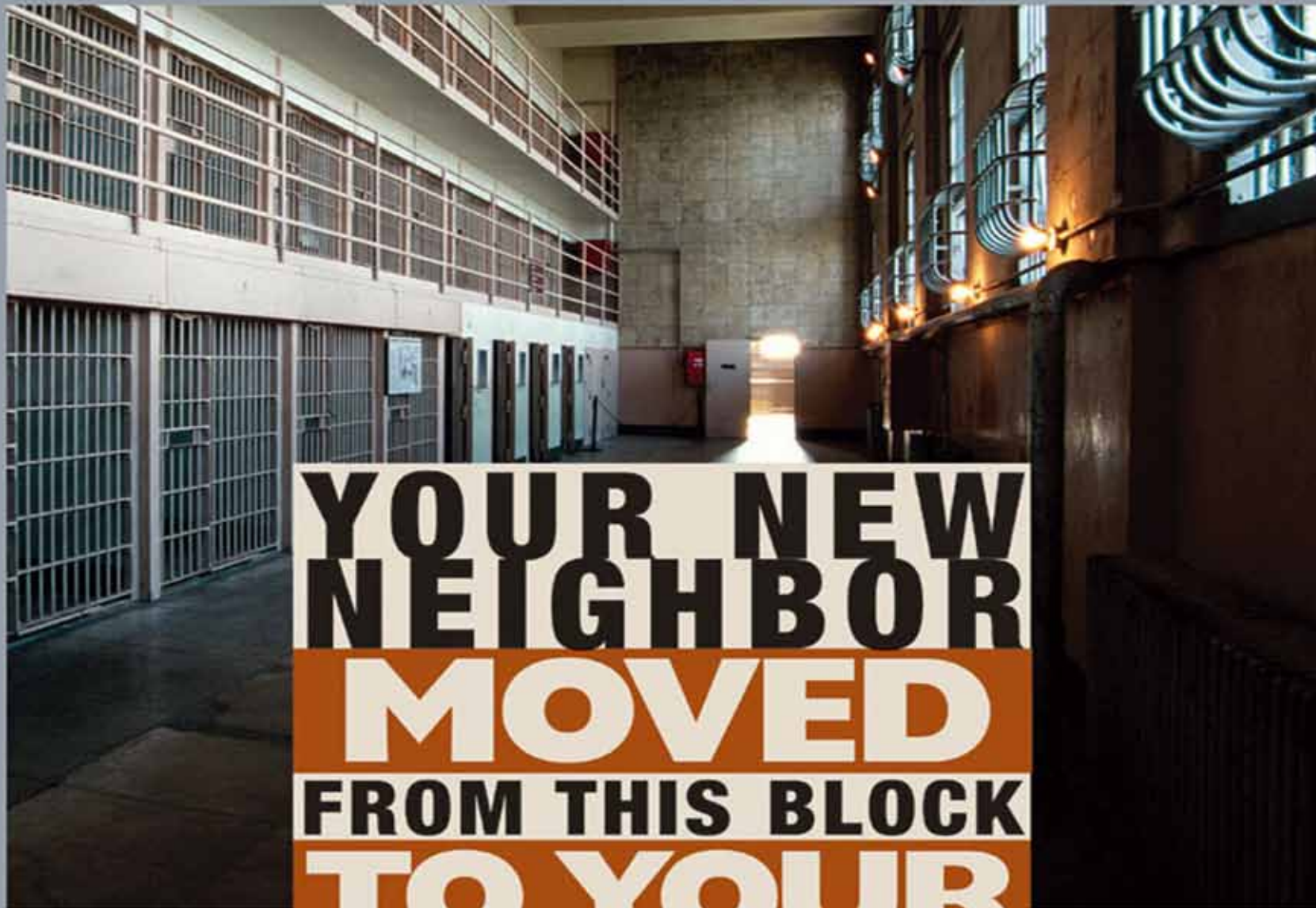
Significantly, CrowdStrike was the only entity that was ever given access to the DNC server to conduct an investigation.

So, assuming it was all true, why would the Russian agents in Steele's dossier have outed Russia as the source of the DNC hack when Russia was supposed to be attempting to cover that up? If they were using Trump, Carter Page, Paul Manafort and others as agents, why would they out them in the Steele dossier? If anything, those claims could cast doubt on Fusion's claims of being connected with Russian agents. If so, that lack of credibility could even boomerang back on the claim it was Russia who put the DNC emails on Wikileaks, one of Steele's central claims.

Was Fusion GPS really working for or with Russia as an agent or not? If they were, then so were the Clinton campaign and the DNC, and the FBI which wanted to carry on Steele's use of Russian agents as sources. If not, then perhaps they made it up.

ROBERT ROMANO

Robert Romano is the Vice President of Public Policy at Americans for Limited Government.



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Franken's Frightening Fix for Free Speech Menace

Comedian-turned-senator Al Franken – yes, THAT Al Franken – recently wrote an op-ed (sorry, no booby-grabs in this one!) published in The Guardian titled, “We Must Not Let Big Tech Threaten Our Security, Freedoms and Democracy.”

Pretty frightening. Not for the alleged problems Franken outlines, but the “Big Brother” government remedies he proposes.

Franken warns of the “outsized role that the major tech companies” – primarily Google, Facebook and Twitter – “play in so many aspects of our lives.” He goes on to accuse these companies of failing “to take commonsense precautions to prevent the spread of propaganda, misinformation, and hate speech.”

Of course, by “commonsense precautions” Franken is talking about government-sanctioned, if not imposed, censorship. And what Franken personally considers to be propaganda, misinformation and hate speech might very well not be considered such by others.

As the old saying goes, one man's trash is another man's treasure.

Indeed, in reading Franken's manifesto I came to conclusion that it, itself, is government propaganda by a government official that is filled with misinformation.

And some might even consider his gratuitous slap at President Donald Trump over what Franken calls the president's “truly unpredictable outbursts on Twitter” to be a form of hate speech which, like beauty, is often in the eyes of the beholder.

To look more closely at this issue, let's start with the obvious...

Google, Facebook and Twitter are “platforms” where the opinions of others are posted – just as The Guardian is a platform where Franken's opinion on publishing opinions he doesn't like was published.

And if you're going to hold Google, Facebook and Twitter responsible for the opinions expressed by independent individuals on their platforms, then you you're gonna have to start holding every website and newsblog responsible for op-eds like Franken's, as well.

This is insane.

If Google, Facebook and Twitter wish to regulate and self-censor speech on their platforms, that's one thing. But unless the First Amendment prohibition on government abridging the freedom of speech and the press is repealed, there's no constitutional grounds for the government censorship remedies Franken is suggesting.

Even if someone writes something that's not protected by the First Amendment – for example, something libelous – the individual who wrote the offending piece should be held responsible, not the platform.

Franken went on to claim it was “alarming” that these three tech companies “have unprecedented power to guide Americans' access to information and potentially shape the future of journalism.”

You mean like the unprecedented power ABC, NBC and CBS had on television before the advent of cable TV?

And even after the addition of CNN, there was still a liberal bias in Americans' access to news until FOX News came along. Indeed, it was the advancement of cable technology that BROKE the philosophical monopoly of the television news airwaves that no one in the 1960s or 1970s could have seen coming.

Indeed, the same new Internet technology that has spawned Google, Facebook and Twitter is also enabling scores of alternative blogs, news sites and podcasts that give Americans' unprecedented options for learning about what's going on in the world today.

We should be encouraging the further development of such messengers, not strangle them in their crib with heavy-handed government regulation and censorship.

Franken goes on to maintain that the very size of tech giants such as Facebook stifles the ability of new platforms to develop. But that's exactly the same argument some were making just ten short years ago about...MySpace.

In The Guardian (the same publication where Franken's op-ed was published) back in 2007, Vic Keegan [reported](#) that...

“John Barrett of TechNewsWorld claims that MySpace is well on the way to becoming what economists call a ‘natural monopoly’. Users have invested so much social capital in putting up data about themselves it is not worth their changing sites, especially since every new user that MySpace attracts adds to its value as a network of interacting people.”

Anybody out there still using a MySpace account?

So much for that argument.

And then there's the advertising.

Franken complains about tech companies using digital advertising as their “main source of revenue” for their platforms, bemoaning that 98% of Facebook's second quarter revenue this year came from its advertising business.

So what?

I open the newspaper. Advertising. I listen to radio. Advertising. I watch television. Advertising.

Sure, if I want to pay for programming free of advertisements – such as movie channels and satellite radio – those options are available for a subscription fee. But what business is it of the government's to decide what revenue model a private business uses?

If you don't like the ads on Google, Facebook or Twitter, simple. Don't go to Google, Facebook or Twitter. And if you're an advertiser and don't like what Franken refers to as the “unfair terms and fees” of Google, Facebook and Twitter, simple. Don't advertise there.

Nobody's forcing anyone to use those sites. It's still a free country. For now. Unless government officials such as Sen. Franken get their way.

And Franken's sheer hypocrisy – or historical ignorance – on this is breathtaking...

“(A)s the wealth of information available on the internet has grown, big tech has taken it upon itself to sort through all the viewpoints, news, and entertainment, and decide for us what we should read, watch, buy, or even how we should engage in civil society.

For decades the Big Three television networks took it upon themselves to sort through all the viewpoints, news, and entertainment and decide for us what we should watch.

For decades big city print newspapers took it upon themselves to sort through all the viewpoints, news, and entertainment and decide for us what we should read.

For decades big commercial radio stations took it upon themselves to decide what music and which musicians we should listen to.

But now, thanks to the very technology Franken seeks to regulate and censor, Americans have thousands upon thousands of options and alternatives which the people themselves sort through and determine for themselves what viewpoints, news and entertainment they choose to read, watch or buy.

Why would anyone ever want the government to take that away from us?

Oh, speaking of buying, Franken also has a problem with how we buy various products online these days.

“Currently,” the comedian-senator complains, “Amazon controls over 83% of e-book sales, nearly 90% of online print sales, and almost 99% of digital audio sales.”

This is brain-dead.

While Amazon truly built a better mouse-trap for purchasing books which has eaten away at market share for brick-and-mortar book stores, the fact is Amazon also has made it possible to self-publish books by authors that in the past would never have been given the time of day by the big publishing houses.

Unless your name was Steven King, John Grisham or Robert Ludlum, good luck getting your book published before Amazon came along. Indeed, using Amazon's “Create Space” service, anyone under the sun can write and publish a book today even if the author is the only one who ever buys it!

Ditto musicians. Until Amazon and other platforms came along, the odds of anyone ever being able to listen to or purchase a musician's product without being signed by one of the big record companies was near zero.

In conclusion, Franken asks “what role should these companies play in our lives?”

Wrong question. The real question is what role the GOVERNMENT should play in our lives.

Thank you very much, senator, but I can decide for myself what role Google, Facebook, Twitter and Amazon play in my life.

I have no interest whatsoever in returning to the Stone Age days when the Big Three TV networks decided what I should watch; when big commercial radio stations decided what I should listen to; when big city newspapers decided what I should read; and when big brick-and-mortar retail stores decided what I could buy.

In short, Mr. Franken's views on who should control what we get to read, watch, listen to and buy is akin to an old saying: “There's nothing wrong with a benevolent dictatorship...as long as you're the dictator.”

In a free society, I'm perfectly content to make those decisions by myself, for myself.

Mr. Franken is free to make suggestions and recommendations as to what I should read, watch, listen to or buy. But when it comes to him using the coercive power of government to make those decisions for me, I defer to those three famous words by former First Lady Nancy Reagan...

Just...say...no.

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