

The Marietta Times

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OUR OPINION

Dig a little deeper

King Bureaucracy and its partners in the private sector have become masters at bleeding taxpayers' dry — a little here, a little there, a little hidden in this pile of red tape, a little disguised as that "service" ... the possibilities are endless. Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost has spent years targeting one such scheme, as he alleges some pharmacy benefit managers are cheating state agencies (and therefore, you) out of tens of millions of dollars.

As state auditor, Yost was able to release an audit of the state's Medicaid program that showed there was not enough transparency to show whether taxpayers were getting what they paid for. As attorney general, he has filed lawsuits against three corporations involved in being pharmacy benefit managers, but it is slow going.

In March, he sued Centene, the biggest Medicaid managed-care contractor in the country, accusing the company of over billing Medicaid. Centene denies the accusation, but moved the case to federal court. On May 28, the company filed another motion, to try to keep the case out of an Ohio court.

Yost has sued Express Scripts for allegedly violating its contract with the Ohio Highway Patrol Retirement System.

"This particular PBM egregiously charged for services it didn't deliver. Its repeated breaches cost Ohioans millions, and we want our money back," Yost said, though, again the company denies the allegation.

And, Yost has sued OptumRx for allegedly over charging the state Bureau of Workers' Compensation by \$16 million. That company, too, denies the allegations.

An Ohio Capital Journal report on Yost's efforts shows an attorney general keenly aware of the opaque complexity these contractors may be using to hide their skimming from taxpayers. Should his allegations be borne out in court, they could serve as inspiration to dig deeper in all facets of state bureaucracy. Tens of millions of dollars may be just the tip of the iceberg.

Getting published

The Marietta Times welcomes letters to the editor of general public interest. Letters to the editor must be considered for publication, letters must be no longer than 400 words, and must contain the writer's complete address and phone number. This information will not be published, but is required for verification before publication. All letters should be written to the editor, and not a third party. The newspaper reserves the right to edit letters for length and content.

The antidote to today's political dogma

Rutgers University's chancellor and provost, who are weathervanes in human form, lack the courage of their convictions, which they also lack. First, on May 26, they announced themselves "saddened" and "greatly concerned" about recent anti-Semitic violence. Soon, however, they crouched into the academic bureaucrat's gush-and-grovel mode because Rutgers' Students for Justice in Palestine objected. The two officials promptly agreed that their first statement, by failing to "communicate support for our Palestinian community," did not serve the university's "beloved community" as "a place where all identities can feel validated." Rutgers' president then denied that their second statement was an apology. It was headlined "An Apology."

This episode, illustrating academia's familiar compound of vanity, mendacity and cowardice, was not startling. It followed the University of California Press, which was displeased with Israel's response to Hamas' rockets, proclaiming "Solidarity and Support for Palestinians in their Fight for



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George Will

Liberation." And a Brandeis University dean, who is White, notifying the world, which had not sought her opinion, that "all White people are racist."

In California, indoctrinators posing as educators say that insisting on "getting the right answer" perpetuates the fiction of "objectivity" and "white supremacy culture in the mathematics classroom." The U.S. Education Department urges school districts to use some of the \$200 billion covid-19 relief funds for "antiracist therapy for White educators." A Madison, Wisconsin, high school invites parents to participate in a segregated discussion of "police brutality and violence," one Zoom link for White parents, one for "Parents of Color."

What starts on campus does not stay there. The flag of Black Lives Matter, a political movement unenthusiastic about the nation,

is given privileged status to fly at U.S. embassies. And so on, and on, and on.

A glimmer of good news is that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit has ruled unconstitutional the provision of the \$28.6 billion Restaurant Revitalization Fund's that grants racial preferences to minority-owned small restaurants. The bad news, which is more discouraging than the good news is encouraging, is that this provision was enacted 153 years after ratification of the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection of the laws. As "equity" eclipses equality as the Democratic Party's aspiration, the infantilization of minorities as permanent wards of government has become the policy of the party of "caring."

The unceasing torrent of political proclamations from people whose politics are not germane to their vocations raises a question. Why do people who have nothing intelligent to say insist on proving this? The urgent question, however, is whether the ideologies of the speakers, and the sensitivities of their anticipated auditors, have produced a

new etiquette: Politeness is understood as genuflection at approved political altars. Today, verifiable truth is just one option among many, with a standing inferior to any ideological agenda that the truth inconveniences.

Last month, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor deliberately misquoted — actually, expurgated — one of Justice Thurgood Marshall's opinions. In her opinion for the court in an immigration case, she quoted from a 1987 Marshall opinion in which he referred to the rights of an "alien," the term used in the statute at issue. She replaced this word with "noncitizen," in brackets. It has become impermissible in journalism to refer to someone who is residing indefinitely in the country illegally as an illegal immigrant. Journalism, however, is written on water, so such curtsies to current fashion do not matter as much as historical documents do. When the highest court begins prettifying yesterday's opinions to conform to today's ideological delicacies, the question becomes: When will today's pandemic of non-sense stop?

Perhaps when the nation is rescued by the human capacity for boredom. In 1982, the sociologist and philosopher Robert Nisbet wrote:

"Many an evil dogma, doctrine, or other intellectual continuity has in the end been undone, not by assault, but by boredom on the part of its victims. A secret weapon against the Soviet Union and the Marx-Leninist creed is the stupefying boredom that this creed induces in the minds of the second and third generations brought up under it."

Because today's dogmas are amplified by ubiquitous media, their life spans from birth to boring can perhaps be compressed into a few years rather than generations.

Tedium is the result when the nation is hectored by shrill claims that something (formerly, capitalism and the class struggle; today, "systemic racism") explains why everything is dreadful. The bores, tuned out by their intended audience, might become akin to audible wallpaper — there, but no longer noticed. Bores will, however, always have the consolation of tenure.

READERS' LETTERS

We have a problem!

We have a problem when for the first time in our history, the former president of the United States refuses to accept the will of the people in a presidential election and the peaceful transfer of power.

We have a problem when the president of the United States incites an insurrection of his followers to stop the Congress from certifying the electoral college votes of that presidential election.

We have a problem when the majority of Republicans refuse to have a bipartisan commission look into the causes for the January 6 insurrection.

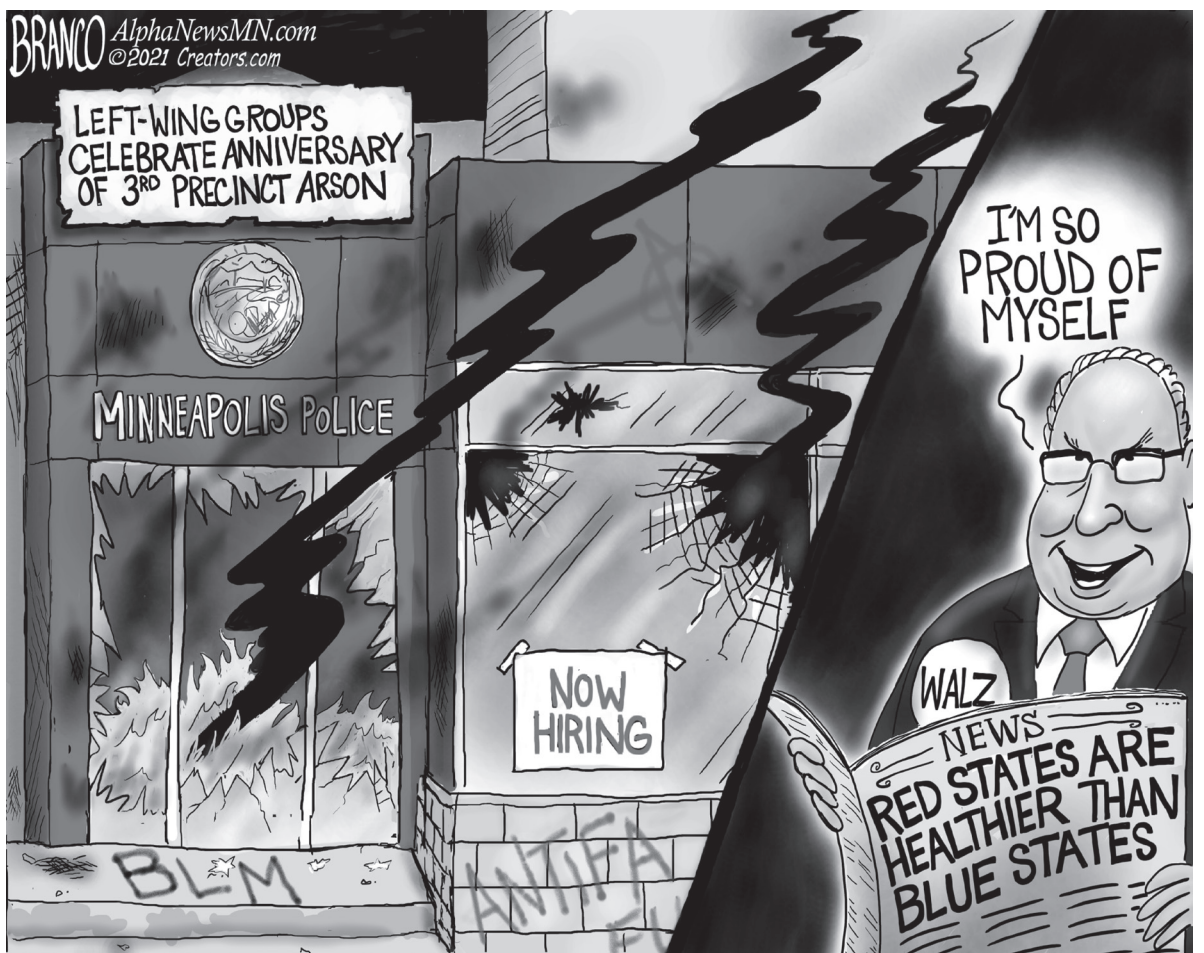
We have a problem when a majority of Republicans think Mr. Trump won the presidential election that was held 6 months ago because Mr. Trump keeps telling them he won.

We have a problem when Republicans are now passing laws to suppress the vote in a majority of states despite the fact that both Republican and Democratic state and federal election officials consider the 2020 election the most secure in American history.

We have a problem with the truth in this country.

As long as Americans depend on social media for their news, many will continue to believe the latest conspiracy theory or lie that someone invents either foreign or domestic in origin.

We have a problem because we no longer have two strong political parties in this country. The Republicans are split between those that want to move on with new lead-



ership and those that are afraid of Mr. Trump and are still doing his bidding to please the 30% who are armed and ready to overthrow the government and put him back in power.

We have a problem because Congress refuses to do the job they were elected to do. Republicans and Democrats used to work together to solve the nation's problems but starting with the Obama adminis-

tration, most of the Republicans now just say "no" to everything the Democrats propose.

We have a problem when our former national security advisor Michael Flynn said May 30 and June 1 that a coup similar to what has happened in Myanmar "should happen" in the United States and a lot of Republicans seem to agree.

We are going to have a problem holding on to our Democracy if the

American people don't start taking more of an interest in what is happening at the local, state and national level of government and elect congressmen and women who are Americans first — defending the constitution and representing you and I — and members of a political party last.

Carol Lazear Mitchell
Marietta

Decline and fall of the Southern Baptist Convention

Russell Moore is either a politically disillusioned troublemaker or a prophet in a time of darkness. In a 4,000-word letter charging the Southern Baptist Convention with racism and sexual abuse, he has single-handedly brought the evangelical Christian world to its knees.

Moore wrote his hard-charging letter in February 2020, while still serving as president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, the influential policy arm of the Southern Baptists. But the letter didn't become public until it was leaked on June 2, the day after Immanuel Nashville, a church that's not part of the SBC, announced that Moore would become its pastor in residence and, perhaps not coincidentally, about 10 days before the Convention meets in Nashville to discuss its mission.

Because this column is only around 800 words, I'll have to do some considerable summarizing. Suffice to say that Moore's letter to the ERLC's board of trustees was an unflinching indictment of the executive committee of the country's largest Protestant group. The Convention has more



Viewpoint
Kathleen Parker

than 47,000 churches with some 14 million members.

"The presenting issue here is . . . sexual abuse," Moore wrote. "This (SBC) Executive Committee, through their bylaws workgroup, 'exonerated' churches, in a spur-of-the-moment meeting, from serious charges of sexual abuse cover-up."

Moore was referring to the case of Jennifer Lyell, who accused a Southern Baptist seminary professor of sexual abuse. Moore corroborated Lyell's account in his letter, as did at least four other employees, past and present. In a separate letter several days ago to the outgoing president of the SBC, Moore said that the SBC Executive Committee altered Lyell's words "to make it seem as though this horrifying experience had been a consensual affair."

Lyell, who was a former vice president at the SBC's publishing arm, Lifeway Christian Resources, told *The Washington Post* that

she had lost her job, her reputation and her health because of bullying and intimidating by the executive committee. In his February letter, Moore wrote with added emphasis: "I am trying to say this as clearly as I can to you, brothers and sisters: These are the tactics that have been used to create a culture where countless children have been torn to shreds, where women have been raped and then 'broken down.'"

Moore wrote that the other "draining and unrelenting issue" concerned racial reconciliation. Moore said one SBC leader "ripped me to shreds," when Moore suggested in 2011 that the Southern Baptist Convention should elect an African American president. "This same leader told a gathering that, 'The Conservative Resurgence is like the Civil War, except this time unlike the last one, the right side won.'" Moore claimed that he and his family have been constantly threatened by white nationalists and white supremacists, including some within the convention itself.

Moore's words carry weight not least because he's one of the most-re-

spected evangelicals in the United States. His greatest sin seems to be that he often thinks, speaks and acts as a Christian. Among other things, he was a frequent critic of President Donald Trump, which borders on blasphemy among the Trump faithful.

When evangelicals Christians threw their support to Trump, many Americans (including yours truly) were perplexed if not shocked. How could they support someone such as Trump, who was willing to divide and conquer through race-baiting and whose misogyny was a sweaty paw on the heart of American womanhood? The overlap between conservative Christianity, especially the Southern Baptist variety, and the Confederate flag-waving constituency has long been apparent and concerning. But the convergence of racist sentiment and Christian leadership is next-level disturbing.

According to Moore, an SBC leader discussing police violence against Blacks said that "only those with guns would prevent black people from burning down all of our cities." One SBC figure said to Moore

in 2017: "We know we can't take you down. All our wives and kids are with you. This is psychological warfare, to make you think twice before you do or say something."

Exposed within that threat is a nugget of unintentional insight: Women and young people are living a different reality than the overwhelmingly White and male SBC leadership, which also could be read as the Republican Party.

A Venn diagram of both organizations would show not so much overlap as a near-perfect circle.

Neither this column nor Moore's letter should be viewed as an indictment of Christianity, without which we wouldn't have much that is culturally good and morally necessary.

But all institutions are subject to corruption and there's no turning away from what Moore has exposed, notwithstanding a not-surprising rebuttal letter from Pastor Mike Stone, who is running for president of the SBC. Stone dismissed Moore's claims as the politically motivated work of a "disillusioned" man.

Or, perhaps, a prophet. May the angels protect him.