

Satanic temple gets ok for after-school club for elementary kids

If this isn't proof positive of the demise of America, then what is?

The Portland chapter of the Satanic Temple – a reference that's significant in itself, as it shows a plurality and therefore, growth of organized Satanism in America – has just won an accommodation from school officials to offer an after-school club for children.

It's called the "After School Satan Club."□ How nice. It's aimed at attracting the elementary-age crowd.

Beginning Oct. 19, Sacramento Elementary School will open doors to the satanic activity, which is being billed as lessons "on science and rational thinking,"□ according to one of the temple's local chapter heads, Finn Rezz.

Rezz kindly explained to the Oregonian it's not that the members of the Satanic Temple are truly Satanists, worshiping some sort of spiritual or supernatural entity of the dark side. Rather, he went on, most are simply atheists who view Satan "as an allegory for free thought,"□ the newspaper said.

The club is solely to foster in its participants a sense of "benevolence and empathy for everybody,"□ Rezz said.

He also said the After School Satan Club is intended to provide students an option to the "Good News Club,"□ a get-together arranged by the Child Evangelism Fellowship – a Bible-based group – that's allowed to meet at the school once a month.

As if the two groups are morally equivalent.

This is the Child Evangelism group's stated mission, on its webpage: "Child Evangelism Fellowship is a Bible-centered, worldwide organization composed of born-again believers whose purpose is to evangelize boys and girls with the Gospel of the

Lord Jesus Christ, disciple them in the Word of God and establish them in a Bible believing church for Christian living. We are committed to helping local churches and individuals evangelize children.”

By comparison, the Satanic Temple touts its mission, on its own website, as “facilitate[ing] the communication and mobilization of politically aware Satanists, secularists, and advocates for individual liberty.” The Satanic Temple also promises to “undertake noble pursuits guided by the individual will.” Really?

Note to Satanic Temple: Have you considered a Marketing 101 class?

But here’s a free thought observance – the Satanic Temple’s name is what it is because it aptly describes all that flows from its members and missions.

Wake up, America. This battle for the soul of our nation – which used to be clearly stated, taught and believed as a country where individual rights come from God, not government – is growing more intense. And the enemy is not only disguising its true intent, cloaking its wickedness in a guise of free thought and with a cloak of kindness – it’s setting sights on the youngest, most malleable minds of all: the children.

And it’s doing it in a way that Satan himself would be proud: by taking a truth and twisting it just enough to cause chaos and confusion – by citing the First Amendment’s religious freedom clause and demanding an equal access to the Christian groups. The end result is predictable: Local governing authorities, afraid of lawsuits, cave to the Satanic Temple’s demands.

Local citizens, even those of faith, ultimately bite their tongues and shake their heads, unsure how to fight off such logical, law-based demands. And atheists, progressives and others with similar mindsets who want nothing more than to tear down the Judeo-Christian fabric of America’s founding and

usher in a secular society that breeds contempt for all-things-traditional, moral and virtuous, rub hands with glee, fueled by yet another chink in the nation's faith-based armor. Well, here's a message to mull: Two roads diverged in a yellow wood – one leading down a path of acceptance, conciliation, regret and loss and the other, down a path of bold and righteous indignation, brutal fights to the finish, glory for God, and honor to both individual and nation.

Which to choose? That, dear Christian and fellow patriot, will make all the difference.

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Hillary's health: fun and games until the FBI finds coincidence

Once upon a time, a brash, bold-faced candidate called Hillary Clinton thought she'd take a seat in the back of the campaign room, collect donor dollars, and adopt a wait-and-see plan as her platform to the presidency, her sole strategy seeming: Donald Trump is a circus act and well – who ya gonna vote for, except me?

Her strategy was underscored by her 18 months-plus of dodging press conferences, and by her near-disappearance from the public campaign trails in August, in favor of private fundraisers.

Then came this, from the pundit and media class: What's up with all her coughing during public speeches? And this, from the medical community, the latest of which included Dr. Drew: Her brain is malfunctioning due to past injury, and she ought to get a neurological exam to prove fitness for the

presidency. And then this, perhaps most damning: The FBI itself reported a tie between Mrs. Clinton's memory lapses and her prior concussion.

In the course of investigating Clinton's long-running email scandal, and in the course of asking the former secretary of State to explain her take on the many briefings she attended while serving President Barack Obama's administration that spelled out just how agents of government ought to handle classified information and public documents – queries she addressed by saying she didn't remember – the FBI, inadvertently but no less shockingly, drew a direct parallel between her brain injury and her inability to lead.

"In December of 2012," the FBI wrote, in summary of interrogations of Clinton over her use of a private, home-based email server for secretary of State business, Reuters reported, "Clinton suffered a concussion and then around the New Year had a blood clot. Based on her doctor's advice, she could only work at State for a few hours a day and could not recall every briefing she received."

While the FBI didn't specifically say Clinton's memory fails were due to her brain injury, the link speaks volumes. And when combined with other health-related snafus on the campaign trail, the question of her presidency has undergone a dramatic shift. No longer are Americans wondering which candidate, Clinton or Trump, would provide the best security, open the doors to the most vibrant economy, pave the way for the most sound and logical border plan. But rather the focus becomes: Will Hillary make it through the day without a visit to the hospital?

Mrs. Clinton's campaign has become like a NASCAR race – one boring lap after another, while waiting to see if there's a crash and burn.

The New York Post ran this headline, in January: "Hillary Clinton Can't Stop Coughing During Speech," in reference to her address before Iowa supporters.

In mid-February, it was this from the Conservative Outfitters:

“Hillary Clinton Suffers From Another Severe Coughing Fit While Speaking in NYC.”

In April, Mrs. Clinton suffered yet another bout of coughing during an interview with a radio station host, after which she pointed to the “allergy season” as the blame. In May, it was more of the same – this time, as the Washington Free Beacon reported – during a California campaign event.

“On June 4,” the American Mirror reported, “Clinton was [simply] listening during a round table discussion when she began hacking uncontrollably.”

Now this latest, another spasm of coughing just this week in Ohio – and videos are making the rounds.

As the Daily Beast opined: “Is Hillary Clinton’s Cough the New Benghazi?”

It’s actually a valid question – and one, like Benghazi and the death of four Americans on Mrs. Clinton’s watch, the mainstream media hates to ask. CNN even has a name for those who question Mrs. Clinton’s physical ability to hold the high office – “healthers”, a play on the “birthers” who doubted Mr. Obama’s constitutional right to the presidency.

But the facts are: Mrs. Clinton suffered a concussion in 2012. She was shortly after hospitalized for a blood clot in her head. She can’t remember key details of her own government briefings, according to the FBI. And now, her campaign trail is marked by one curious coughing fit after another. Her supporters may scoff, but the reality remains: A president who can’t speak, is going to be hard pressed at diplomacy. A president who isn’t healthy, especially in brain and in head, sets an uncertain White House tone and therefore, puts the fate of the nation at risk.

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Obama's sneak attack on U.S. Sovereignty sets stage for climate regulation

The regulations, they are a-coming.

That's what at least one noted climate skeptic warned, pointing to the very capable pen and phone politicking of President Obama that's allowed him great success in bypassing Congress on various pet agendas – particularly, on those dealing with the environment, and even more particularly, on one provision he signed earlier this year, the Paris Accord. The measure supposedly commits America to abide what the Obama administration described as “the most ambitious climate change agreement in history.”

But as Marc Morano, publisher of “Climate Depot” and producer of the new film, “Climate Hustle,” a production that exposes the propaganda side of environmentalism, said in an interview: The commitment is smoke and mirrors, but a “cunning” Obama may see his long-held green-based regulatory visions achieve reality all the same, due to an unaware populace.

The accord itself is far-reaching and requires participating nations to actively prevent, via regulatory controls, the average global temperature from rising more than two degrees Celsius above “pre-industrial levels,” and to “undertake rapid reductions” on various emission levels around the world. In other words, bye-bye U.S. economic production.

Technically, though, Obama's signature means nothing. Why?

The Senate never ratified the treaty, as required by the Constitution. Obama can sign all he wants, but truly, the accord won't last past January, when his administration ends.

So says the legalese, anyway.

But this president operates under a policy of act first, seek permission – never. And if America turns a blind eye to what he’s done in recent months – not just with the Paris treaty, but with his use of the Environmental Protection Agency to press regulatory controls turned down by Congress – the reality is the provisions of the accord and more will take root and become the new national norm. It won’t be long before all these environmental measures are considered binding.

“If the next president continues the policies of President Obama with the EPA and the U.N. climate treaty, we are going to have a situation where these climate regulations will be codified,” Morano said.

One immediate impact?

“The coal industry will be long dead and buried,” he said.

More detriments will soon follow.

“Be afraid, be very afraid of the U.N. agenda,” Morano said.

“The U.N. has been trying now since at least 1992 to get the U.S. tied up in an environmental regulatory scheme ... but the United Nations openly admits they want to redistribute wealth via climate policy. It’s social engineering.”

The situation is all the more alarming because the will of the American people has been clear for years: Voters don’t want overly restrictive climate change regulations. Not only has cap-and-trade consistently gone down in legislative flames – not only has the United Nations failed to receive U.S. Senate ratification on its many environmental treaties and accords. But these climate skeptic camp wins have come even as Democrats have held a clean sweep of the country’s highest political offices – while holding majorities in both House and Senate and serving under their own party’s president.

“We are facing political defeat for the first time on global warming,” Morano warned.

All eyes may be currently turned on the presidential campaign. And voters of free-market minds and conservative bents may be waiting with anticipation and relief for the exodus of Obama. But his departure does not automatically undo the last eight

years. Remember, it was Attorney General Loretta Lynch who said in early 2016 her “goal is to position” the Justice Department to continue President Obama’s law enforcement agenda, long after he leaves office.

It seems the White House has set the same designs on Obama’s environmental agenda, leaving the fate of America’s sovereignty, post-January 2017, in a state of uncertainty, danger and potentially further demise. Only an aware constituency, emboldened by a passion for freedom and a love of country, can control the bureaucratic beast of Washington and press the new president, whomever that might be, to keep to an “American first” mindset.

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Donald Trump and his chicken little detractors

It’s late August, the campaign clock is ticking. Donald Trump’s poll numbers are down – and not just by slim margins – and Hillary Clinton’s camp has all but locked up the race.

So the story goes, anyway.

But Donald Trump, if nothing else, is a competitor. His entire campaign has been marked by detractors, scoffers, mockers, predictors of gloom, declarers of doom, prognosticators of losses and more losses – and yet, in the end, the candidate’s steadfastly risen to the top. The smart voter, the savvy pundit, ought not close the door on a Trump administration just yet.

Guessing in August which candidate will win in November is nearly as impossible as predicting the Second Coming – and

that's not even based on polls. That's just common sense. Why? Polls are snapshots in time, fickle by nature. They're also about as scientific as climate change modeling, with outcomes that depend largely on the data that's inputted. A poll that queries, "If the election were held today, would you vote for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump," is going to bring a lot different results than one that poses 10 questions about platforms, policies and issues and then asks, after each, "Which candidate, Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump, would do the best job" on the particular topic. Heck, polls are so persnickety that even the order of the candidates during the presentation of the question, or the phrasing – the inquiring, for example, of which would prove more "successful" versus "do a better job" – influences the respondents and therefore, the results.

Historically speaking, polls just aren't always what they're cracked up to be.

U.S. News & World Report wrote in September 2015, in a piece bluntly titled, "The Problem With Polls," how Mitt Romney was supposed to beat Barack Obama, then-Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell was supposed to lose to political upstart Alison Lundergan Grimes and Scots weren't all that decided on whether to declare independence from Great Britain – all according to separate surveys at the time. Well, how wrong the pollsters were, leading the news outlet to conclude "public opinion polls have racked up a few big-time fails in recent years, embarrassments that compelled a leading firm to conduct an internal audit to find out what went wrong."

Yet here we are, a year later, gasping a collective breath about what MSNBC reports: "Latest polls reinforce Republicans' sense of dread." Fox News hosts and pundits Eric Bolling and Dana Perino gave a real-time sense of what this supposed dread's all about during a recent televised discussion on Trump's falling numbers and the validity and value of polls. When Bolling cited skewing as a factor, Perino blasted back, in essence: Don't be absurd.

“The future of this party is at risk,” she tweeted, shortly after. And in another tweet, she vowed, “I will not lie to you about the state of this race.”

But really, isn't the only truth here the one that says predicting the outcome of this presidential race is impossible?

Both Trump defenders and Trump detractors can find plenty in the polls to support their respective causes. On the pro-Trump side, there's the botched Literary Digest straw poll in 1936 that predicted Alf Landon over Franklin Delano Roosevelt; the 1996 failure of three television stations to properly place Bob Dole in the race against Steve Forbes and Pat Buchanan for the presidential primary in Arizona; the epic exit polling fails, and subsequent mistaken media announcements, that gave wins to the wrong presidential candidates in 2000 – Al Gore over George Bush – and in 2004, John Kerry over again, Mr. Bush. Don't forget the famous Ronald Reagan-Jimmy Carter campaign season, and the wide discrepancies in real numbers versus polled numbers.

On the “Trump's going down in flames” side, however, there's this: Polls sometimes prove correct. And just because they aren't 100 percent accurate, that doesn't mean they aren't sometimes accurate.

If that's the argument – and it has to be, because that's the base truth of the matter – then the smart voter, the smart pundit, resists the panicked “sky is falling” politicking and realizes the race is long, the candidates are savvy, the campaigns are both making adjustments and in response, so will the numbers. Let's not call the race just yet – let's put Chicken Little back in the cage.

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Massachusetts Uber tax sheds light on the socialist mindset

Massachusetts has a new tax aimed at punishing Uber and Lyft drivers who dare to compete with the government regulated taxi companies.

Of course, the tax advocates don't describe it that way. Rather, they say the 20-cent fee – and note, it's always a fee in bureau-speak, never tax – is a win-win for all that will take a cut of all Uber and Lyft rides to distribute among the taxi companies, the cities and towns and to the state. The estimated pot of this fee-not-tax could reach millions of dollars annually, and provide big bucks to the state's transportation fund. On top of that, the revenues will also be used to help taxi services identify and put in place "new technologies and advanced service, safety and operational capabilities" that could also lead to more workforce development, according to the text of the bill signed into law by Gov. Charlie Baker, a Republican no less.

Wow. It's like a wonder drug – a cure-all for the state's transportation and job opportunity woes that seem to include failing taxi technology, whatever that means. But peer past the politicking and take a whiff of the stink. The tax, which take a nickel per Uber ride for the taxi companies, a dime per ride for the local governments, and another nickel for the state to deposit in its transportation coffers, is rooted in socialist ideology.

As Reuters reported, Larry Meister of the Boston-area Independent Taxi Operator's Association cheered its passage by saying it's about time – "Uber and Lyft drivers have been dodging the regulations that taxi companies have had to abide for years. One such regulation? Vehicular inspections by police.

“They’ve been breaking the laws that are on the books that we’ve been following for many years,” Meister reportedly said. So the answer is more laws – more fees, taxes and government controls and interventions? That’s a miserable mentality that has no place in a free-market America.

As Kirill Evdakov, the chief executive of Fasten ride service, said while opposing the tax in the same Reuters story: “I don’t think we should be in the business of subsidizing potential competitors.”

That’s exactly right.

Only a socialist – someone who thinks the government should oversee and control business and the economy – could applaud a tax that takes money from a private enterprise and siphons it into the hands of another private enterprise. It’s particularly galling, though, when the money being taken from the private business is being used to bolster the bottom line of a competing business – and then sold as a “safety” benefit for all.

This is theft, pure and simple. And the perpetrator is the government.

Calling it a fee, dressing it as a workforce development benefit, touting it as a safety measure and talking it up as a fairness issue that levels the free market field so all can compete is nothing but spin. You want an equitable playing field for both taxi and Uber drivers – one that provides a fair shot at profit for all? Think less government, not more. Think capitalism, not socialism.

Taxi drivers ought to be fighting for less regulation of their companies, not more rules and burdens for their competitors. That, after all, is the free-market way.

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LGBTS vs 1st amendment: the fight for religious freedom ratchets

Tread carefully, America. The skirmishes around the nation centered on rights for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders are not really about rights for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders.

They're about the decimation of the First Amendment and the destruction of traditional family. And the latest local battle to drive a wedge in the national norm is in Utah, where 25 groups dedicated to advancing the LGBT rights' movement have signed on to a letter urging the Big 12, which is considering a team expansion, to turn a blind eye on Brigham Young University.

Of the Mormon school, the coalition wrote: "[BYU] actively and openly discriminates against its LGBT students and staff. In fact, through its policies, BYU is very clear about its intent to discriminate against openly LGBT students, with sanctions that can include suspension or dismissal for being openly LGBT or in a same-sex relationship. ... Given BYU's homophobic, biphobic and transphobic policies and practices, BYU should not be rewarded with Big 12 membership."

But that's typical special interest-driven bunk.

BYU, a private facility in Provo that's owned and operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, does in fact have policies regarding homosexual relations. It also has them – and curious, but the coalition's letter doesn't speak to this – for heterosexuals. In fact, the school's honor code, which speaks to the need of students and staff to "demonstrate in daily living on and off-campus those moral virtues

encompassed in the gospel of Jesus Christ," is specific in its expectations for everybody who attends. It requires all BYUers to "be honest," to live a chaste and virtuous life," and to "participate regularly in church services." It doesn't even allow them to swear – or drink coffee or caffeinated tea. It's in the context of discussing the do's and don'ts of proper BYUer behaviors that homosexuality is brought up, in a special section that makes clear: "Homosexual behavior is inappropriate."

But before cracking the "see, I told you so" whip wielded by the rabidly pro-LGBT rights' crowd, read a little bit more. Simply professing same-sex attraction is not a code violation. "One's stated same-gender attraction is not an Honor Code issue," the policy reads. "[BYU] will respond to homosexual behavior rather than to feelings or attraction."

That means an honor code violation is only given in those instances when students or staffers act on those sexual attractions. But here's the part the LGBT agenda-drivers conveniently overlook and ignore: BYU's sex-based prohibitions apply equally to homosexuals as well as heterosexuals. In other words: the honor code demands chastity for all unmarried students and staffers, no matter their sexual preferences.

If the whole LGBT movement is aimed at demanding and receiving equal rights and equal treatment – at getting the same types of societal benefits as heterosexuals – then the reaction to BYU's honor code should be this: Mission accomplished. But it's not. And that's because the LGBT community's clamor for rights at choice spots around the nation in recent months has little to do with justice and equality and everything to do with destroying societal roots, norms and standards.

In 2012, lesbian activist Masha Gessen said in a speech "it's a no-brainer that the institution of marriage should not exist" and that sanctioning a man and a woman as the legal caretakers of children is ridiculous.

In 2013, the far-left Nation published opinions from LGBT activists Tamara Metz and Amber Hollibaugh who said,

respectively, the next step for the movement was to “disestablish marriage” and to “queer” the country’s economy. “I want a LGBTQ movement that queers the reality of Walmart line jobs, sex work and homeless shelters,” Hollibaugh wrote.

And in 2016, the Huffington Post’s “Queer Voices” section blasted this headline in a story about offering stock photographs of gays to wire services like Getty: “Redefining the ‘Traditional’ American Family in 7 Stunning Images.”

Meanwhile, the battle over bathroom genders goes on, with entities from the White House to Target retail demanding men dressed as women be given access to female facilities, and vice versa. But this BYU battle is a First Amendment religious freedom hit in disguise. What the coalition of LGBT groups is in effect saying in their letter is that Christian-based organizations have a right to their religious beliefs – so long as those religious beliefs don’t conflict or oppose the LGBT agenda. And they’re trying to steamroll that belief into the common culture via the sports world. Americans, particularly those of Christian faith and patriotic bent, take heed. BYU today; the local church tomorrow.

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North Carolina bathroom battle brings out Obama’s big guns

...DOJ Plus Big Business

Talk about a federal clamp-down. Nearly 70 of the country’s largest corporations have jumped into the LGBT boat with the

Obama administration's heavy-handed Department of Justice and set course toward one target: North Carolina's bathroom law. Who'd have thought transgender rights would be the issue that finally moved this administration past campaign rhetoric and into the field of actual action?

After all, America suffered through red line after red line in the Syria fiasco – in which President Obama kept threatening, then backtracking on threats, then threatening again to take military action if President Assad didn't turn over his cache of chemical weapons. Then Americans suffered through month after month, turning to year after year, of dismal job prospects, all the while tuning in to national TV to hear a do-nothing Obama brag about the feds' more positively skewed statistics. Then the world watched and waited for Obama to take decisive action on terrorism and ISIS – and, sadly, as any good Orlando, Florida, or Nice, Paris, resident could confirm, is still watching and waiting.

But making sure girls' bathroom doors are open to boys, and women's to men? Obama's on it.

His latest is to make sure North Carolina, which passed a law – (Note to Obama: You know, that thing that goes through the legislative process and is duly debated and decided by the constitutionally elected?) – called the “Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act,” requiring individuals to use the public restrooms that conform to their birth genders. The law was North Carolina's defense against Obama's unilateral – meaning, devoid of Congress – dictate to stateates, via Justice Department and Education Department letters, to open public school restrooms and changing facilities to those of both genders, so that boys who went to bed on Monday as males but awoke on Tuesday as females could then use the girl's facilities.

North Carolinians didn't agree with that line of thinking, and thus, HB2 was born, via electorate-supported legislation.

But Obama doesn't agree with North Carolina's stance, aligned with the Tenth Amendment and states' rights as it is, and sent

out his federal top law enforcement dogs to issue a quick smack-down. The Justice Department in early May filed a suit to halt North Carolina's law from taking effect – and this time, dozens of big businesses piled on to pressure the state to back down. Specifically, in early July, almost 70 of the country's top corporations, including PayPal, Nike, Capital One, IBM, Salesforce, Apple, American Airlines and Marriott, jumped into the legal fray and filed a legal brief with the Human Rights Campaign in support of the Obama administration and its Justice Department's demands.

What a heavy boot for something like 0.3 percent of the country's population. If only Obama could amass such a speedy and hefty show of force against America's enemies – against radical Islamists, for example, or North Korean dictators vowing to obliterate the West.

But this battle for transgender rights being waged by the Obama administration is not really about transgender rights. It's about upsetting a republic and overturning a Constitution – about tossing out the traditional and heralding in a new order, one that talks a talk of fairness and justice but walks a walk of intolerance for all views tinged with conservatism, Christianity or even unbridled American patriotism.

With the suit, this is the message Obama, the Justice Department and Big Business send: White House wishes trump legislatively enacted law.

Or, as Justin Danhof, legal counsel and director of the Free Enterprise Project for the National Center for Public Policy Research put it: "Since the DOJ doesn't have the constitutional authority to rewrite laws, it is trying to seek the same result by establishing precedent with this court case. Such a result would irreparably damage America's unique separation of powers and open the floodgates for increased executive branch control over state and local matters."

In other words, not only would Obama get to play king, once again. But future presidents, both Democrats and Republicans,

would have a clear path to play the king's role themselves. Bathroom rights? Think longer term. Transgender justice? Hardly. This battle over gender is about power, control and the fate of Americans to govern as Founding Fathers envisioned.

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IRS, DOJ slapdown: one small step for the fourth amendment

David, meet Goliath. Incredibly enough, a small-town Maryland dairy farmer and his wife just won their legal claim against the Internal Revenue Service and Department of Justice and will now be able to recoup tens of thousands of dollars seized in what turned out to be an unconstitutional application of civil asset forfeiture.

What's more, the win could prove a chip in the whole block of forfeiture laws, also known in constitutional circles as the Devil of the Fourth Amendment and by property and business owners as government-sanctioned theft.

That's because civil asset forfeiture laws, as overseen and implemented by the Department of Justice and the U.S. Marshals Service, with some help from the IRS, allow government entities to seize properties – including cash, cars, computers and a host of other items beginning with the letter A and running through the letter Z – from those who have not been convicted of any crime. In some cases, like in that of the Maryland dairy farmers, Randy and Karen Sowers, the targets of seizures don't even have to be formally accused of any crime. It's a profitable business, this government taking, In 2015 alone, the Department of Justice oversaw the collection of

more than \$1.6 billion from the 50 states participating in the civil asset forfeiture “equitable sharing” program that then disburses funds back to localities.

The Sowers were just another statistic caught in the government’s civil asset forfeiture ring.

For years, the couple operated South Mountain Creamery in Middletown, selling eggs, milk and other dairy products at local farmers’ markets, in mostly cash transactions that poked the interest of the IRS. In 2012, the agency seized tens of thousands of dollars from the couple’s bank account, saying they had purposely deposited money in amounts less than \$10,000 to avoid tripping the banking reporting requirements – a practice known as “restructuring” and one that feds say is commonly used by criminals to dodge taxes and prosecutions for illegal business ventures.

But as Forbes pointed out in a recent article: “Randy and Karen were never charged with structuring (or any other crime).”

With civil asset forfeiture, the absence of criminal behavior is not a defense. Cash seized, the Sowers faced the dismal prospect of fighting in court to prove their innocence, or forfeiting \$29,500 to the feds – so they chose the payoff, Option B. Then in 2014, the IRS changed its policy and said restructuring laws, the frequent precursor to civil asset forfeitures, could only be applied to actual criminals – ostensibly, no longer to those who simply deposited the wrong amounts of cash in the bank from milk and ice cream sales. Good news for the Sowers; they sued, and the Institute for Justice that handled their case won.

In a letter, the Department of Justice wrote “the forfeiture in this matter is being mitigated in the full amount forfeited of \$29,500,” and advised the Sowers to contact the IRS Asset Forfeiture Coordinator for payment. What a win – and now, the Institute for Justice is predicting the victory could “set a precedent that should make it possible for hundreds of other property owners in similar cases to get their money back as

well.”

Great. But before cheering, consider this: The U.S. Marshals Service says it’s currently managing \$3.1 billion worth of assets seized under the forfeiture program. That translates into 17,564 individual pieces of property or sums of seized cash, according to the agency’s own website. In 2015, roughly \$365 million of seized assets were shared with state and local law enforcement. And since 1985, a total of \$7.4 billion of seized properties have been shared with participating agencies. The point?

The Sowers’ win is tremendous. The chance for the Sowers’ case to set a precedent that will lead to the return of wrongfully seized properties for hundreds of other families is terrific. But that’s just a dent. Anything less than what the Fourth Amendment promises – that the “right of the people to be secure in ththeir persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probably cause” is an unconstitutional taking. A handful of wins does not an intact Fourth Amendment make.

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Gun control? Try prescription pill control first

There’s a cycle in this country that goes like this: Shooting, call for gun control, Democratic rail against Republican refusal to pass senseless gun control, and brief lull and calm before the next shooting and gun control storm.

The latest in this scene, of course, played in Orlando. Barely

had the dead and injured been carted from Pulse when President Obama was making his anti-Second Amendment case, pulling at liberal heartstrings while entering classic scold mode: "This massacre is therefore a further reminder of how easy it is for someone to get their hands on a weapon that lets them shoot people in a school, or in a house of worship, or a movie theater, or in a nightclub. And we have to decide if that's the kind of country we want to be. And to actively do nothing is a decision as well," he said.

But actively doing something that's useless is a decision, too – and one that seems more political back-patting than truly helpful. Not to state the obvious, but once again, guns don't kill people. People carrying guns kill people. And denying the main reasons why people carrying guns kill people won't solve the killing problem.

Orlando's shootings seem based in radical Islamism. Obama doesn't like to admit that, so for a time, the nation has to suffer another round of Who-Dunnit, a game involving the White House, a complicit media and a grouping of equally dopey left-leaning bureaucrats who all join in the reindeer fun and act like passing gun control laws and censoring 9-1-1 emergency calls will stop the jihad. So it goes; the Team Obama version of the war on terror.

But deceptions run deeper when it comes to gun control. For instance: The anti-Second Amendment crowd may slide this under the radar, but according to Linda Lagemann, a former licensed clinical psychologist with 23 years of experience who presently serves as a commissioner with the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, dozens of recent cases of high-profile shooters have shared more than an affinity for guns – they've shared a pill-popping background that included the taking of psychotropic drugs, some at least which were medically and legally prescribed.

There was James Holmes, who was taking Zoloft as he murdered 12 and wounded 70 during an Aurora, Colorado, massacre in 2012, Lagemann said in an email. There was Ivan Lopez, the

Army soldier who killed three and injured 16 at Fort Hood in 2014, all while taking prescribed doses of Ambien, the blog DC Clothesline reported.

Others are tracking the ties, as well. As CBS News reminded, there was Dylann Storm Roof, the 2015 South Carolina church shooter, found with the anti-pain Suboxone. As Western Journalism pointed, there was Elliot Rodger, the 2014 Isla Vista, California, college shooter on Xanax and Vicodin. And as the Washington Post reported, there was even Eric Harris, from way back in 1999, whose dead body after committing the Columbine High School shootings was found to contain the anti-depressant, anti-anxiety Luvox.

There are more – plenty more. So rather than using every instance of gun-related murders in this nation as a jumping point to push more gun control, wouldn't it seem worthwhile – after ruling out radical Islamism, that is – to at least take a look at psychotropic prescriptions and research whether they're precursors to violence? Even medical experts admit these drugs aren't always helpful.

In January, the Food and Drug Administration announced the approval of Adzenys XR-ODT, an amphetamine extended-release oral tablet to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in patients aged six or older. Part of its labeling, as described on RxList, warned of its potential to “exacerbate symptoms of behavior disturbance” in those with a “pre-existing psychotic disorder,” as well as its chances to cause a “manic episode in patients with bipolar disorder.” Worse, the label cautioned that even “at recommended doses, [the pill] may cause psychotic or manic symptoms,” including “hallucinations, delusional thinking or mania in patients without prior history of psychotic illness or mania.”

But guns are the problem? Seems like pill control might be the better argument.

Donald Trump's detractors are the modern day Alexander Hamilton's

Donald Trump, in recent comments to Bill Clinton's former White House mouthpiece, George Stephanopoulos, told an ABC television audience that while a unified Republican Party is a good idea, he isn't going to lose sleep if certain GOP members who oppose his candidacy don't ever stop opposing his candidacy.

"We want to bring the party together," Mr. Trump said, on "This Week" on ABC News. "Does the party have to be together? Does it have to be unified? I'm very different than everybody else, perhaps that's ever run for office. I actually don't think so."

Mr. Stephanopoulos, for his part, seemed mystified by the response, and pressed the point that Speaker Paul Ryan, who refused to immediately board the Trump train, was "different," that he was the "highest elected Republican in the country right now," and dismissing this simple reality could result in a crushing blow to the billionaire businessman's entire campaign.

Well, it won't. In fact, failing to kowtow to the established powers-who-be in and around Washington – not only Mr. Ryan, but other respected Republicans like George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, Jeb Bush and Mitt Romney – will only give yet another notch to the Trump belt off candidacy. Note to GOP: the more the party cries, the higher Mr. Trump's numbers rise.

It's the outsider image that's fueled his campaign thus far – that, and the simple vow to take down the establishment, brick by border wall brick. Just a few months ago, the argument

against Mr. Trump was he was a buffoon. But he's beaten back all his Republican challengers and now stands alone, the sole pick of the party.

So the argument's shifted to focus on his chances of beating likely Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. And his detractors say, with just as straight a face and just as much vehemence as they did months ago while calling him an imbecile, circus act and worse, that he can't beat Mrs. Clinton.

Yet polls are starting to show otherwise on that point.

A Military Times survey conducted in early May of 951 active duty members, reservists and National Guardsmen found favor for Mr. Trump over Mrs. Clinton, 54 percent to 25 percent, and over the self-declared socialist Sen. Bernie Sanders, 51 percent to 38 percent.

A Rasmussen Reports poll conducted in late April gave the General Election win to Mr. Trump, not Mrs. Clinton, by a margin of two percentage points. And while several other polls paint Mrs. Clinton as the clear leader in a face-to-face matchup against Mr. Trump, the closer election day comes, the tighter the margins become and in fact, it won't be long before more headlines, like this May 10 one from Vox, appear on the horizon: "Reality check: Hillary Clinton's lead over Donald Trump is not that big, and could vanish."

And you know what else will likely vanish in the weeks to come?

Mr. Trump's inner-party detractors, particularly ones presently in office. They'll have to, else face the ire of Republican voters at the polls in their own upcoming elections. Talk of third party candidates is all smoke and mirrors; little more than howling and hubris from the diehard disbelievers – just the type who would during this nation's formative years rally around Alexander Hamilton while scoffing at Thomas Jefferson.

The reference is not casual.

Founding Fathers didn't intend for the country's politics to be run by parties. Rather, as George Washington himself warned

in his 1796 Farewell Address, political parties would bring partisanship, division and ultimately, “despotism” and tyranny.

He thought this even while appointing Alexander Hamilton as Treasury secretary and Thomas Jefferson as secretary of State – two men whose views of the rightful role of government couldn’t be more different. Hamilton favored a strong federal government; Jefferson, a stronger system of states’ rights. It’s their contrasting views that helped solidify the two-party system of politicking that stands to this day.

What would Washington say today?

He’d likely look at the division within the GOP, the rancor and very “spirit of revenge” he warned of taking root with a two-party system – a spirit that seems aimed in modern times at Mr. Trump – and shake his head sadly while muttering, in some manner of speech more natural to his era: Told you so.

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Obama’s diversity stand: destroy white neighborhoods

In July 2015, the Obama administration released proposed rules aimed at diversifying white neighborhoods and putting a stop to so-called “segregated living patterns” around the nation. In April 2016, the Obama administration sent out a stern warning to landlords around the country, telling them they couldn’t automatically turn away convicted felons because doing so could be perceived as racial discrimination – the logic being too many blacks and minorities are unfairly imprisoned as it is.

And now?

As Paul Sperry with the New York Post found, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro is setting in motion a means to divert Section 8 housing funding to rich areas – read, predominantly Caucasian – and give financially strapped homeowner hopefuls “mobility counselors” who can help find them the McMansions of their dreams. As Sperry noted – this, even as a “similar program tested a few years ago in Dallas has been blamed for shifting violent crime to affluent neighborhoods.”

From a macro-perspective, these recent regulatory moves demonstrate exactly why the government and housing don’t mix – the larger the federal role, the smaller the individual freedom. Once government comes in, unfettered free markets go out, and in all matters of real estate, it’d be worthwhile to apply Ronald Reagan’s famous quip: the government is not the solution to the problem; the government is the problem. Developers, renters, landlords and buyers ought to make the decision on what to build and what and where to buy, not the bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.

But from a micro-perspective, the issue becomes even cloudier – and darker.

What’s going on at HUD is simply a reflection of President Obama’s own biases, and his personal crusade to right what he perceives as a wrong – the failure of white America to justly treat black America.

We saw this in Obama’s first presidency when he called out a white Cambridge police officer for “acting stupidly” during the arrest of a black Harvard University professor for disorderly conduct, and likening the event to America’s “long history” of “disproportionately” stopping “African Americans and Latinos” for law enforcement matters – despite admitting in the same breath he didn’t know “all the facts” of the event.

We saw this in Obama’s second presidency when he furthered the Black Lives Matter mantra – which was based on a lie about how

a white Ferguson, Missouri, police officer ultimately shot and killed a black teenage suspect – to the point of ordering his Justice Department to investigate and oversee police departments around the nation, all the while saying the “African American community is not just making this up” about discriminatory cops.

Now we’re seeing that same attitude played at HUD – and it goes something like this: Suburbs are white because the white powers-who-be purposely keep out blacks and other minorities. And it’s going to take Obama and the federal government to level the playing field and bring about a socially just resolution.

Or, as Rush Limbaugh just put it, in his apt analysis: It’s all about the control.

“This is more regulation from Housing and Urban Development – faceless, nameless bureaucrats, bringing inner city dwellers intoo your suburban neighborhood,” Limbaugh said, during a recent radio broadcast. “It’s already been established by government’s own studies to be disastrous ... but that’s not going to stop them from doing it anyway, because that’s the objective, when you get right down to it. They don’t care. They don’t care about the circumstances of people. They care about having power over people.”

Forget the notion of a home being a homeowner’s castle. Forget the idea of private property rights being sacrosanct, and once they’re not, doors to tyranny crack open. Forget the Constitution and the failure of that sacred text to contain any authorities for HUD and the executive to assume these housing market authorities – or for HUD to exist, for that maatter. This is free market America, Obama style, and what that means for the average homeowner, home renter, developer, mortgager and landlord is this: Social justice trumps all. And while all Americans have rights, some Americans have a little bit more rights than others.

Dissatisfied? Quit thinking 'R' vs. 'D'

A Quinnipiac University survey recently found 57 percent of Americans agreed the country “has lost its identity,” 57 percent felt they were “falling further and further behind economically,” and 76 percent believed “public officials don’t care much what people like me think.”

Gallup reported in March, meanwhile, that 71 percent of Americans were dissatisfied with the “way things in the United States were going at this time,” the same number who responded to the identical poll question a month earlier.

What’s up with all the angst?

“Many American voters, especially Republicans, are dissatisfied with their own status and the status of the country, but by far the most dissatisfied are Donald Trump’s supporters, who strongly feel that they themselves and the country are under attack,” said Quinnipiac University poll director Douglas Schwartz, in a statement.

Well, that is the theme of Trump’s campaign, to make America great again – and it’s one that’s resonating big time with voters across the country.

But thinking Mr. Trump, or Sen. Ted Cruz – or, God forbid, the self-declared socialist Sen. Bernie Sanders – can solve what ails America is flawed thinking. First off, Americans have been complaining about the country for years. In July 2015, Fortune blasted forth the headline: “12 Signs America is on the Decline.” In April 2014, Salon warned: “Global rankings study: America in warp-speed decline.” In October 2013, the New Yorker offered: “Measuring America’s Decline, in Three Charts.” In March 2012, the Atlantic posed: “The Decline of the West: Why America Must Prepare for the End of Dominance.”

In 2011, it was the American Spectator, with the title, "Is America in Decline?"

The demise of America, it seems, has been a long-running go-to topic for the press, the pundits and the pollsters. So long, in fact, it leads one to wonder: Do elections really bring change?

Not so much. Not in any long-lasting, meaningful way, at least. Which brings up this second point: It's not about the "R" versus "D."

Looking at politicians to provide for the needs and concerns of America seems a cycle of insanity – a red herring, even. But this story, from Raphael Cruz, a Christian pastor who spent his growing and formative years in Cuba, under the watchful eyes of an oppressive regime? This story is the elephant in the room.

Jerry Newcombe wrote for the Christian Post: "Rafael Cruz tells a story where the soldiers of Castro would teach the children to not believe in God, but instead to believe in Fidel. Soldiers would come into a kindergarten class and tell the children, 'Okay now, close your eyes and pray to God for some candy'. The children would comply, but there was no candy. Then they would say, 'Close your eyes and pray for candy to Fidel Castro'. The children would close their eyes and pray accordingly, as the soldiers quietly placed candy on the desks."

What a horrific example of leading children astray, and simultaneously, a tremendous warning of what is really rotting America: the turn from God as leader and toward government as provider.

Inserting fresh faces into the government, whether Trump or Cruz or Clinton or Candidate X, is a temporary fix, at best. America's government is only a microcosm of America at-large. And there will never be a single politician, or even grouping of politicians, that actually make America great. They can't; the country's greatness doesn't flow that way.

America's greatness comes from this: "We hold these truths to

be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

America’s greatness is from the bold idea that rights stem from God, not government – that it’s the individual with grreatest worth, not the collective. And until we win back a country where that sentiment is intuitively felt and instinctively enacted upon, where “in God we trust” is the lesson being taught the coming generations, not “on government we depend,” then the changing faces of politicians will be just that – new look, neww messaging, but bringing the same dissatisfying results.

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Forget cory Lewandowski – the left has the real record of assaults

Donald Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski may be facing assault charges for allegedly grabbing at the arm of former Breitbart reporter Michelle Fields – but when it comes to shoving aside members of the media, it’s the Democratic Party that’s shielding the real offenders.

There are enough examples for a creative YouTuber to make a snarky video of Dems’ attacks through the years. Suggestion? Set it to the aptly titled Olivia Newton-John’s “Let’s Get Physical” pop hit. It may be obvious, but it’s still funny.

But until – the written word will have to suffice.

First up: February, 2009. That’s when Gawker reported how a man who was escorting Leon Panetta, who was President Obama’s

pick for CIA director, outright grabbed at a CongressDaily reporter, Chris Strohm, during a hearing. Strohm described to Politico how he “felt this hand grab my right arm and push me aside,” that he responded by saying, “please don’t touch me,” over and over again. Another at the scene, Tim Starks, a Congressional Quarterly reporter, confirmed Strohm’s version of events to Politico, telling the news organization how he saw the Panetta escort “grabbing him by the arm and moving him away.”

Lawsuit?

Nope – life moved on for both Strohm and Panetta henchman. The scarier thing, Gawker wrote, was “no one seem[ed] to know who Panetta’s escort [was] or what he does.”

Fast-forward to January, 2010, when a staffer for Massachusetts Democratic Senate candidate Martha Coakley made national headlines for roughing up a Weekly Standard journalist, John McCormack – and then, outrageously enough, pretending to be said reporter’s knight in shining armor.

Rush Limbaugh actually gave a priceless description of how the assault went down during his January 13 broadcast: “You know, this is amazing, folks. I don’t know if you know this or not, but last night, Martha Coakley, the Democrat candidate in Massachusetts, was in Washington for a fundraiser ... [and] came out of a restaurant ... followed by a reporter named John McCormack. He is from the Weekly Standard. He tried to ask her a question, and somebody came and shoved him to the sidewalk into a metal railing, and he fell down on the sidewalk, and then this same person ... Then [this] same person goes up and says, ‘Oh, my God, somebody fell!’ He goes down, helps the person up and then kept bumping the guy, the reporter, so he couldn’t get close to Coakley.”

The perpetrator?

“The video shows it. It was Michael Meehan, a Democrat Congressional Campaign Committee guy,” Limbaugh said then, pointing out that Coakley, an attorney general, “stood there and watched this whole thing take place and didn’t do anything about it.”

Again, no criminal charges – just aa lame apology from Meehan. And who can forget just a few weeks ago when Hillary Clinton's top aide, Huma Abedin, was captured on camera physically shoving a woman during a brief interaction?

As Gateway Pundit recounted: "When the woman tried to hug Huma, she pushed the woman away and moved on. No charges were filed."

Sometimes, Democrats take a more subtle approach. In August, 2008, ABC producer Asa Eslocker was arrested while standing on a sidewalk, trying to take pictures of Democratic senators and bigwig party donors gathered at the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver. Police couldn't immediately tell ABC executives what his charges were, or explain video of the scene that showed "a cigar-smoking Denver police sergeant, accompanied by a team of five other officers, [putting] his hands on Eslocker's neck, then twist[ing] the producer's arm behind him to put on handcuffs," ABC reported at the time. Later, after they had time to think, police said he was guilty of trespassing, interference and failing to follow a lawful order, and that the complaint came from someone within the hotel – a known"central location for Democratic officials," ABC reported.

Seriously, somebody cue Olivia. Lewandowski may have his little misdemeanor arm tap, but when it comes to silencing the press, Republicans can't hold a candle to Democrats.

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Lindsey Graham's astonishing

attack of Trump, angers voters

Sen. Lindsey Graham unleashed an astounding attack on Donald Trump on national TV the other day, faulting the Republican front-runner for fueling the party's poor showing among Hispanics and stating bluntly the billionaire businessman ought to be kicked out of the GOP.

In so doing, he provided the perfect case-in-point of why voters are backing Trump in the first place.

What part of "the status quo has got to go" messaging of this current campaign trail did Graham miss? He represents a class of politicians the voters are tired of hearing, the same type who's fueling this campaign season's unstated "insider-out, outsider-in" phenomenon.

Graham said of Trump: "He took our [party's] problems in 2012 with Hispanics and made them far worse by espousing forced deportation. Looking back, we should have basically kicked him out of the party."

Put aside for the moment the line of logic Graham is suggesting here – that Republicaans ought to consider immigration policy a political issue first, and matter of national security, second. Even CNN host Wolf Blitzer picked up on the other curious facet of Graham's assertion, asking him to explain: Just how in the heck would you have accomplished that?

Graham – who apparently goes by the vaulted titles of Keeper of the GOP Key and Grand Watchdog of the Party Member List – responded thusly: True Republicans could have banded together to fight Trump and in so doing, driven him from the party. Or, in his words: "We could all [have] ganged up and [do] what we're doing now."

The problem, of course, with that viewpoint is it's not working. The gang's all ganged. Trump has been fighting off media scorn, Republican Party derision and presidential

primary contender attacks for months – partly by going on the offense, partly by swatting on the defense with a playbook that seems to return 10 times the insult. And newsflash: He's winning.

So taking to national television to boldly proclaim that kicking the front-runner Republican primary presidential candidate out of the Republican Party is the direction the Republican Party ought to go is not only ineffective, because it fails to take into account the millions of voters who support Trump. It's also outrageously elitist.

Graham's remarks underscore why Republicans hate the Republican Party in power right now – because the very people who've corrupted the conservative message by deal-making to death with Democrats are now trying to paint themselves as not just defenders of the GOP, but definers of what constitutes a GOPer. National Review tried it, with a full-blown assault of letters from those at the supposed forefront of Republican politics pointing out why the Donald just won't do. Mitt Romney, twice-failed presidential candidate, tried it with a nasty verbal press conference that rocked the national media and included such phrases as "Trump is a phony, a fraud," and Trump is a "bully," and Trump offers the nation little more than "absurd third-grade theatrics."

Yet in the days that followed, voters and Trump supporters said: We don't care.

Trump may not be the best candidate for the White House job. He may not be the best candidate for the Republican Party to fight off what's sure to be a savage campaign battle against Hillary Clinton. But note to Graham and others who share and seek to spread his viewpoint: Enough already.

Like Obama with guns, who surges sales every time he addresses the nation post-shooting and touts the need for more Second Amendment crackdowns, the attacks on Trump are only fueling more support for him. If you truly don't want Trump as president, stop exposing the reasons conservatives are

rallying behind him in the first place – because of the elitist “we know better than you” attitude that’s coursing through much of the present-day Republican Party.

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Pastor attacked for mentioning Jesus is a threat to everyone

In the latest act of “Mikey Weinstein Takes on God” – the long-running theatrical performance of the Air Force Academy graduate and JAG Corps member who exits service, founds the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and then turns attack dog on all-things-religious in U.S. branches of service – we see a Protestant chaplain under fire for daring to describe a battlefield conversion to Christianity.

Once again, Weinstein shows why he’s an enemy of America’s freedoms, particularly the First Amendment – and not, as he puts it on his website, “the undisputed leader of the national movement to restore the obliterated wall separating church and state in the most technologically lethal organization ever created by humankind, the United States armed forces.”

The backstory is this: Air Force Capt. Christian Williams, who serves as a chaplain, helped cut a video for the Air Force Recruiting Service in which he explained why he viewed his role as “one of the most rewarding ministries in the world,” he said, as Military.com reported. About two-and-one-half minutes into the video, Williams then tells one of his personal stories of inspiration – one of the times during service that really struck home the importance of his chaplain

role.

"Before I left Iraq," Williams said in the video, "[this female airman] told me that 'as a result of the example I saw you set ... I have accepted Christ as my personal lord and saviorr.' You can't put a price tag on that."

Weinstein complained. Why?

He says including the story of the airman who accepted Jesus in the video – which is five years old, by the way – violates the U.S. Constitution as well as Air Force prohibitions against military leaders proselytizing or promoting their personal religious beliefs.

That's ridiculous. A chaplain telling a story about Jesus is about as non-controversial and expected as a plumber telling a story about his work with a wrench, or a carpenter recounting a day's work with a hammer, or a reporter speaking about a politician's plusses and negatives. It just comes with the job.

Sharing a personal story about the power of Jesus is not the same as actively trying to convert someone to Christianity.

It's also something that's well within the boundaries of the freedom of speech clause in the U.S. Constitution.

But Weinstein's little more than an anti-religion zealot and activist, and his crusade to rid the military of all-things-God has crossed well beyond the realm of logical, far into left-field zany – well into the danger zone for those who care about the fate of the First Amendment. What's worse is Weinstein acts as if he's a defender of religious freedoms, a stellar example we should all follow and support. Don't be fooled. He's a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Well, there's just one lesson to be learned from him and his latest attack against Williams, and one response to give, and that's this: Americans, both of Christian faith and not, need to band together and fight his MRFF onslaughts, his personal persecutions against displays of religion and religious beliefs, his attacks on constitutional free speech, his false

claims as a defender of a free country. It's not just a religious freedom issue – it's a freedom of speech matter. And allowing people like Weinstein to decide what's OK to say versus what isn't would be a tragedy for our nation, our Constitution and our ability to exercise what Founding Fathers and early patriots fought so hard to ingrain into our politics and culture – and that's the basic God-given right to speak one's mind, regardless of who might take offense.

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Christianity crisis: time to fight for the first amendment

Fox News host Jeanine Pirro, of “Judge Jeanine” fame, issued a scathing commentary on the state of Christianity in modern day America, telling a crowded NRB International Christian Media Convention audience in Nashville, Tennessee, they better watch out – the demise of the First Amendment first creeps, then floods.

“Although it seems that the protections that we have in the Constitution are protections that no one can take away from us, I want to tell you that they're already being taken away,” she was widely quoted as saying. “The irony of today's liberalism that is accepting of anything and everything is that it is sanctioning discrimination against Christians.”

She's right, you know. Don't believe it? Parents, send one of your kids to school with a clearly marked Bible to carry to each class and open during quiet times. See what happens. Politicians, try and open the next public meeting with a prayer that invokes the name of Jesus. Private sector professionals and business owners, see how it goes denying

service to customers whose demands conflict with long-held biblical teachings and Christian beliefs.

There's more – much more.

A just-released report from First Liberty Institute in Texas – “Undeniable: The Survey of Hostility to Religion in America” – sheds some serious light on the ability of Christians in America, circa 2016, to publicly show, profess and abide beliefs.

The atmosphere is chilling.

Some of the report's findings: Companies have faced prosecution for failing to offer abortion-inducing drugs in employee health care plans. State governments have come under fire for displaying the 10 Commandments – despite the fact the face of Moses, the giver of the Law, is displayed over the gallery doors of the House Chamber in the U.S. Capitol as part of a group of 23 “historical figures noted for their work in establishing the principles that underlie American law,” according to the Architect of the Capitol. Local governing bodies have faced legal challenge for opening meetings in Christian prayer. High school sports' coaches, athletic team cheerleaders, public school students and teachers have been brought to court, denounced, criticized, punished and in some cases, fired, for the so-called crimes of praying in public, handing a Bible to a student who requested it, displaying biblically-based messages of encouragement at sporting contests, mentioning the name “Jesus” during a valedictorian graduation speech, or, as in one third-grader's case, trying to hand out religious messages in goodie bags for classmates at the annual “Winter Party” – the same type of school event that for decades was commonly accepted in this country as the “Christmas” party.

If the argument from the left is public school is no place for religion – that such messaging is better left for Sunday church service or for private Christian educational facilities == well, consider this, from the same report: In the recent Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & Sch. V.

EEOC, a private Christian school was told by the U.S. Justice Department it could not fire a teacher with narcolepsy by citing the “ministerial exception” clause – that lets churches choose religious leaders absent government interference – because no such clause exists. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately ruled in the school’s favor, but what was the Justice Department trying to accomplish here – control of the churches?

That doesn’t even touch on the crack-downs in the U.S. military against open displays of Christianity – the case of a Navy chaplain who faced an inquiry because he spoke of sex outside of marriage through the looking glass of his religious beliefs, the case of an Air Force master sergeant who found himself in hot water for explaining his biblical views against homosexuality to a gay commander – who had insisted he explain.

The report spans a shocking 376 pages. Obviously, atheists and progressives have been having some banner years. So what’s the solution? Fight.

Those who do nothing – who let such take-downs of the First Amendment go forth unfettered – simply don’t deserve to call themselves patriots and defenders of the American way of life.

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Scalia’s ‘nothing to see here’ death just won’t die

Justice Antonin Scalia’s death leaves questions.

There – it’s said.

Others put it differently. Comedian and social justice

activist Dick Gregory put it this way: "You know they murdered him, right? ... One of the mmost powerful people in the world and he ain't got no bodyguard, man?"

Radio giant Michael Savage put it this way: "Was Scalia murdered? We need a Warren Commission-like investigation. This is serious business."

Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump put it this way, first on a Savage show that was later widely quoted: It's "pretty unusual" Scalia was found with "a pillow on his face." And Judy Melinek, a forensic pathologist who conducts autopsies for the Alameda County Sheriff Coroner's Office in California and is also the CEO of the consultant firm PathologyExpert Inc., put it this way, in a lengthy opinion piece for CNN: "Even if this decedent weren't a controversial and powerful national figure, he should have had an autopsy. Why? Because whenever someone is dead in bed at a private residence with a pillow over his head, there is the possibility that the death was not a natural one."

Well, no du'h.

Did the West Texas authorities who opted against performing an autopsy think – after what the Washington Post labeled in a headline, "The Death of Antonin Scalia: Chaos, confusion and conflicting reports," – their decision would simply send the justice quietly into that good night? The reason questions persist in Scalia's death is that questions have gone unanswered – and no matter how many claims are made to the contrary, the truth is nothing speaks truth like an old-fashioned autopsy.

Look at what the Associated Press just reported: Presidio County District Attorney Rod Ponton, in an interview with the AP, cited a letter from Rear Adm. Brian Monahan, the doctor who serves members of Congress and the Supreme Court, to make this well-repeated point: Nothing to see here about Scalia's death. Move along. But the letter is hardly proof positive. It was addressed to Presidio County Judge Cinderela Guevara – the local point person who wrapped her death inquiry by ttelephone, based on findings of local law enforcement rather

than on visits to the scene – and concluded Scalia's sleep apnea, degenerative joint disease, pulmonary problems, high blood pressure and penchant for smoking all contributed to his death. Well, how did Monahan know that, without examining Scalia's body or the death scene? Yet it was that letter that led Ponton to conclude Scalia's "significant medical conditions led to his death," AP reported.

That's all fine and dandy, but why not release that letter to the public? The AP asked for it, and was given the run-around, first from Ponton then from Guevara, and then from the Texas Department of State Health Services, which denied releasing a copy of Scalia's death certificate.

How does all this add up to a suspicious-free death?

One more fun fact, fueling the fire: One of Scalia's close friends, Bryan Garner, returned from a trip to Singapore and Hong Kong with the justice on February 4. After learning of Scalia's death, he spoke of their trip in an interview with the National Law Journal: "[Scalia] was unbelievably energetic and always on the go. ... Having spent 14 hours a day with him so recently, he seemed very strong. I was stunned and shocked [at this death]."

Look, Scalia's sudden and shocking death could be nothing more than that – a sudden and shocking albeit natural death. But the fact that so many questions have gone unanswered, and that those in position to answer those questions are shrugging their shoulders – a la "Questions? What questions?" – is suspicious in and of itself. An autopsy could have quieted all the whispers. Unfortunately, historical accounts of Scalia's life and his considerable list of accomplishments, both in and out of court, are now going to be marked with a giant asterisk that overshadows and prods: But was his death really natural? And rightly so.

Scalia's death sets Mitch McConnell as gate guard: we're doomed

The sad, very sad, sudden death of the Supreme Court's leading defender of the Constitution, Justice Antonin Scalia, has left a gaping hole that President Obama's quickly vowed to fill – and that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has just as quickly vowed to protect.

But note to conservatives: Hold the cheer. McConnell's political promises mean little more than one thing – we're doomed.

Obama said, within hours of learning of Scalia's death: "I plan to fulfill my constitutional responsibilities to nominate a successor in due time. There will be plenty of time for me to do so and for the Senate to fulfill its responsibility to give that person a fair hearing and a timely vote."

McConnell responded: "The American people should have a voice in the selection of their next Supreme Court justice. Therefore, this vacancy should not be filled until we have a new president."

And the smart, savvy political conservative ought to conclude: Obama's going to nominate a far-lefty, McConnell's going to put on a heck of a show of a fight – key word, show – and in the end, the White House will prevail. How do we know these truths to be self-evident?

Look at McConnell's past.

In August 2013, then-Senate Minority Leader McConnell backed off a challenge to implement Obamacare, despite the fact a defunding effort from the likes of Sens. Ted Cruz and Mike Lee was gathering steam on Capitol Hill. The Senate Conservative

Fund released a statement that read, in part: "Mitch McConnell is telling people he opposes Obamacare while he refuses to oppose its funding."

In September 2013, Breitbart News, citing a source, reported McConnell and fellow senator, John Cornyn, were "whipping senators to shut down debate" on a House measure to defund Obamacare, "unbelievably ... leading the fight to fully fundd" the health reform.

In February 2015, McConnell announced support for a so-called "clean" Department of Homeland Security bill that capitulated to Democratic demands while stripping Republicans of their means of fighting Obama's amnesty plans, leading one unhappy Republican senator to wryly comment: What "a total victory for the Obama position."

In July 2015, McConnell sparked Senate and American outrage by allowing a vote on a highway bill that fully funded the highly contested Export-Import Bank, while blocking amendments to defund Planned Parenthood, at a time when the health clinic was under fire for videos that appeared to tie it to a gruesome baby body parts-selling scheme. Another amendment he blocked at the same time? One called "Kate's Law," in memory of Kate Steinle, the woman who was fatally shot by an illegal immigrant with a prior felony record while she walked in broad daylight in San Francisco. The law would have imposed a five-year prison sentence on any illegal who was convicted of a violent crime after already being deported and was widely seen as a common sense measure. Not to McConnell, apparently, who used a technique called "filling the tree" perfected by former Majority Leader Harry Reid to block the amendments from reaching the floor for vote.

"This strategy involves filling time allotted to amendments with insignificant procedural measures," RestoreAmericanGlory.com reported. "It may not be particularly democratic, but it works."

And who can forget McConnell's absolute and ongoing contempt for the tea party?

In March 2014, he was quoted as bragging how Republicans were

“going to crush them everywhere” in upcoming elections. In December 2015, he cautioned voters against voting for primary candidates who couldn’t win in the general election, naming several tea party politicians who failed in their own recent bids.

Room doesn’t permit to run down all the budget deals and pacts McConnell’s made through the years that bend to Democratic will but toss Republicans beneath the bus.

Establishment at all costs – concession by any means. That’s McConnell’s driving political mantra. And he’s the one in charge of the Senate, which will soon be tasked to provide, in line with Article 2, Section 2 of the Constitution, “advice and consent” to Obama on Scalia’s replacement?

God help us. Without, Attorney General Loretta Lynch, or someone else talked about as Scalia’s replacement of similar leftist slant, will be confirmed to the court within the next couple months.

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Hey, Vatican City: why so much gold – so few refugees?

In the next week or so, the Council of the European Union will meet to discuss how well its ongoing commitment to provide for the millions of Middle Eastern, Asian and African adult males and other migrants fleeing the likes of Syria has been going. But let’s just cut to the chase. The bureaucrats in charge are going to conclude A) the European Union needs to do more and B) the United States needs to do more. What’s not going to be determined, however, is the need for any sort of first-person

attachment to those conclusions.

Germany's Angela Merkel may double down on her national embrace of the migrants, rapists and all. But Germany's Angela Merkel is never going to open her massively spacious Bundeskanzleramt-based apartment to taking in a few of these refugees herself.

Nope. That Price is Right "come on down" attitude has a boundary – and it weaves nicely along the border of Not In My Yard.

Politicians being politicians, nobody's really surprised at their hypocrisy. Where it really nags, however, is in the religious realm. And where it's really personified is in this continuing migrant crisis is in the pope, his church, and Vatican City.

Migrants are our brothers and sisters, in search of better lives, Pope Francis told the world, during a January address on Vatican Radio.

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," he told the United States, during a September 2015 address on Capitol Hill.

"Behind these statistics are people, each of them with a name, a face, a story, an inalienable dignity which is theirs as a child of God," he said in a November 2015 speech from Vatican City marking the 35th anniversary of the Jesuit Refugee Service, just days after a series of terror attacks rocked Paris and threatened to slow the flow of migrants into the area.

Noticeably absent during these speeches? Faces and photographs of the dozens of refugee families welcomed into Vatican City, the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church and the home of the pope. The sovereign city-state sits on a 100-acre parcel of well-guarded, partly walled land by the Tiber River, and is home to some of the world's most notable treasures, from art work to gold, as well as to the highly secretive – and highly profitable – Vatican Bank with untold amounts of assets and investments. Plenty of money to spend on provisions for these

children of God, it would seem.

The world saw a glimmer of goodwill from the cloistered city when the pontiff, in a widely reported September 2015 address, called on every parish, monastery and religious community in Europe to take in a refugee family or two – and backed that call by vowing to house two such families in the Vatican. But weeks later, and the segregated city had only found one family worthy of welcome – and curiously enough, given the high Muslim population of the refugees, a Christian family belonging to the Melkite Catholic Church, at that. Within months, many of the Catholic Churches called by Pope Francis to do their moral duty and open doors to refugees abandoned the idea in seemingly similar fashion.

One can imagine the cry of the migrant standing outside one of the five armed-guarded doors that keep Vatican City secure: “Father, got a spare coin?”

It’s bad enough listening to politicians prattle on from tax-paid venues about the need to provide for the world’s suffering, before being escorted by armed officers to their chauffeured vehicles and dropped within the gates of their high-security homes. But having a religious leader wag moral fingers at the rest of us, from behind gilded screens and amid some of the world’s most precious of metals and treasures – from behind walls that protect this wealth from the riffraff of society – is just too much. It’s unChristian, and it’s everything people hate about organized religion. But Jesus said it best, speaking to the money-lovers of the time: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!”

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Indoctrination's knocking: colleges nationwide scooping up social justice

The latest example of America's places of higher learning serving as little more than an indoctrination tool for the Far Left's visions of nirvana comes by way of Iowa State University and its planned "Social Justice Summit" set for mid-February.

Enough of the social justice already. It's not that the idea of "justice for all" is a flawed concept. It is, after all, part of our national flag pledge – "with liberty and justice for all." But where these training sessions go awry is turning "justice for all" into "justice for the few" or "justice for the select."

Or worse, as Iowa's day-and-a-half long summit does, turning the definition of justice into something it's not.

The university defines social justice on its website as "the continuous process of eliminating ignorance and prejudice ... to bring about greater equity among all members of society" via – and this is the key part – the "redistribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities."

Whenever redistribution is talked about, the next question that creeps is this: By whose authority?

And far, far too often those discussing this notion aren't doing so in a church or nonprofit setting, where charity or Christian-based values dictate the voluntary terms of the redistribution. Rather, they're talking about it as a government venture – indeed, as a government mandate. That's hardly constitutional. The redistribution of "resources, opportunities, and responsibilities" by government is a socialist principle.

This is what our next generation of leaders is learning.

The topics of social justice discussion range from minority

rights, equality issues between genders and among races, and LGBT causes, to ones dealing with poverty, housing, education and jobs, mostly as seen through the lens of race, gender and sexual preferences. The problem with this type of analysis, however, is it discounts the notion of God-given talents – the idea that all individuals are embedded with seeds of greatness from a higher power, albeit not all are given the same abilities – while it plays up the victim card. It teaches the idea,, say, that a homeless man is homeless because he was raised by alcoholic parents, or because he was the product of poverty, or because he suffered unfairly and turned to drugs as solace – but not because he made poor choices in life that led to his deplorable condition.

So when he's a victim, and not accountable for his own choices, his problems become all of society's – and if that line of logic is drawn to its conclusion outside of a church or charitable setting, the inevitable result is more government action, more bureaucratic overreach, more taxpayer burdens.

It's one thing to look for root causes for human misery. It's quite another to make the leap that all human misery can be cured by government provisions.

But that's social justice training. And it's not just in Iowa – or for just a day or two. The seven-day Social Justice Week kicks off at Georgetown University on February 20. It just wrapped at the University of Miami. It's due to begin in March at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina.

Those are just the voluntary offerings – the little side events presented on campus as “something students can do” to pass the time. As Inside Higher Ed reported, plenty of other schools have been pushing social justice as a core curriculum, and for plenty of years.

In 2012, the outlet reported: “Whitman College in Washington and Philander Smith College in Arkansas both have new programs on social justice. Brandeis University offers a minor in

social justice and social policy. Grinnell College offers an award to young social justice leaders. Lake Forest College in Illinois also offers a minor. Saint Mary's College of California just announced a new master's degree concentration in social justice leadership. And the movement isn't limited to private institutions: Arizona State University introduced a master's degree in social justice and human rights last fall." Get ready for the lawsuits. It won't be long before these highly trained, highly educated and highly charged graduates learn the best way to bring about their visions of equality and justice isn't the poster, protest and banner, but rather the courts, state houses and Congress.

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The rise of Bernie Sanders – the fall of America

All eyes may be on the Republican primary and the brewing battles between Donald Trump and Sen. Ted Cruz, and Donald Trump and Fox News, and Donald Trump and National Review, and Donald Trump and fill-in-the-blank – but the Democratic race is where the real news is happening.

The fact that Sen. Bernie Sanders, a self-declared Socialist, is heating up the campaign trail against the one-time presumptive primary winner, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, is one of the biggest tragedies facing America right now. It also happens to be one of the most under-reported.

Flash back to February 2009 when the cover of Newsweek blared forth the shocking headline, "We Are All Socialists Now" and the inside article elaborated with the subtitled query: "Can America Adopt a More European Model, Only With a Faster Rate

of Growth?" Then there were the widely watched "Hardball" interviews of July 2015 and January 2016 when MSNBC host Chris Matthews asked the Democratic National Committee's Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Mrs. Clinton, respectively, to define the differences between their political party and Socialism, with the ensuing results in both cases being wide-eyed stutters and off-guard stumbles. Then there was the should-be-historic reach-out of President Obama to Socialist Mr. Sanders with a January 27 closed-door meeting at the White House, the nation's highest hallways of power, to trade thoughts on ISIS, foreign policy and other matters of political importance.

Anybody else see the alarm here?

Add in Mrs. Clinton's lagging poll numbers, due in large part to her own doing, and the simultaneous rise of Mr. Sanders', and what we have is a seismic shift in politics, one that says bluntly, It's okay to admit being a Socialist. The tag doesn't bring a blacklist. It brings an invite to the White House.

True, Democrats have been leaning Socialist for some time. But they've been masking it as progressive policy.

Mr. Sanders now represents for Socialists what Michael Sam, the first openly gay NFL player, represented for the homosexual rights movement – legitimacy. His Siimon and Garfunkel "America" all-court press has freed Socialists from the shadows. Their stigma is gone. And that – not the poll numbers, or the day-to-day politicking, or the he-said, she-said arguments, but rather the sad disappearance of America's noble republic, complete with principles of limited government as based on God-given rights – is the big story, the media-missed picture. Giving Mr. Sanders such a large platform is a startling commentary on the state of U.S. politics and culture. Watching his Socialist race be greeted with such favor is a pitiful discovery that speaks volumes about the country's demise.

The fact that some argument has popped from the far-left camps condemning Mr. Sanders as little more than a Socialist wanna-be, and that the candidate himself often says he's more a

Democratic-Socialist, is little comfort to those who see America in the same vein as the Founding Fathers – or little matter. It's the movement of Socialism into the mainstream, in either hyphenated form or stand-alone, that's the larger concern, the loudest outrage.

Thomas Jefferson was said to have written, "It is to secure our rights that we resort to government at all." Mr. Sanders, on the other hand, offered this, in a January 19 Twitter post: "Our job is to tell every kid in this country, that if they work hard, regardless of family income, they will get a college education." Or this, the same day: "I got a message for the Walton family of Walmart: Get off of welfare and pay your workers a living wage." Or this a day earlier, of a Martin Luther King Jr. quote: "Call it democracy, or call it democratic socialism, but there must be a better distribution of wealth."

These are the ideas that are gaining steam in America. Truthfully, they have been for years, and from both sides of the political aisles. The disappointing and depressing realization, though, is that thanks in large part to Mr. Sanders and his steaming charge through Iowa toward New Hampshire, outing them out as Socialist is not dimming their appeal.

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Lois Guitierrez goes on tour

to naturalize migrants to vote against Trump

Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) is poised to travel the nation in partnership with Hispanic rights groups, find a million legal migrants, immigrants and green card holders, and get them naturalized by May so they can vote against Donald Trump.

It's been dubbed the "Stand Up to Hate: Naturalize, Register, Vote" tour. What a dismal waste of the taxpayer's dime and an entirely improper role for a seated congressman who's supposed to represent real constituents, not would-be or wanna-be ones.

"Our goal is to have one million to become new U.S. citizens this year and we've got to get it done by the end of May," he said, in a press call reported by Politico. "This is realistic."

And speed is apparently of the essence.

"One of the main reasons we're recommending people naturalize now is to stand up to the hate the rhetoric of this political season," he said, pointing to Trump as the main divider.

Specifically, Gutierrez will be joining forces with the Latino Victory Foundation, the National Partnership for New Americans, Mi Familia Vota, America Action and the Service Employees International Union, as well as with Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) to attend or sponsor 100 or so rallies and workshops in Nevada, Colorado and other key battleground spots.

Their four-month goal of naturalizing a million is ambitious. The pathway to citizenship is normally lengthy, somewhere between six months and several years, and includes paperwork, fingerprinting, interviews and exams. As the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services reports in its "10 Steps to Naturalization" pamphlet, "the most common reasons for continuation [of application] are you fail the English and/or civics test" or "the USCIS officer determines you need to provide additional documents." Failing the written exams alone

leads to another 60-to-90 day delay – and that's if the bureaucratic wheels are all moving at textbook example speed. The naturalization process also includes substantial fees, though the payment process is filled with waiver applications and exemptions – and likely, Gutierrez and his minions will help considerably in this regard.

This is all such outrage.

Think what you will of Trump. Love him or hate him, or regard him somewhere in between. But here's a glance at Gutierrez's compass: "In 1986, Gutierrez was elected alderman [in Chicago] ... At the time, he was a member of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, a Marxist-Leninist entity. ... In the mid-1990s, [U.S. Rep.] Gutierrez developed close ties to the pro-socialist New Party in Chicago. ... In 1999 he collaborated with fellow Progressive Caucus members ... to pressure President Bill Clinton (through Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder) to free 16 convicted terrorists belonging to the FALN, a Marxist-Leninist paramilitary organization that had carried out 146 bombings during a 25-year period, killing nine people while injuring and maiming dozens of others. Indeed, Gutierrez was the FALN's chief spokesman and advocate," DiscovertheNetworks.org reported.

He's since spent much of his Capitol Hill time advancing radical amnesty and immigration causes – this "Stand Up to Hate" tour the latest.

His record is clear. Gutierrez is a disgrace to his office and ought to be drummed from Capitol Hill. The fact that he's not – the fact that this audacious un-American congressman is allowed to boldly use his public servant position to further his personal agenda for those who aren't even voting constituents without worry of losing his seat – only underscores why Trump's messages are resonating in the first place: We very badly need to make the country great again.

Requirement to get gun permit as unconstitutional as can get

Truly, it's doesn't get more unconstitutional than this.

A small town in Massachusetts – Lowell, located about 35 miles from Boston – has apparently decided the best way to keep criminals from shooting and killing innocent citizens is to make residents who want unrestricted carry permits first pen essays explaining just why, and then submit those justifications to the chief of local police to grade. Those who don't obtain passing grades aren't given their permits.

Insert "Are you kidding me" expression of disbelief here. In effect, the town of Lowell has exempted itself from the Second Amendment.

Of course, the powers-who-be don't see it that way. They see it as a necessary precaution, a way of ultimately saving citizens from crime and killers.

Or, as local Police Superintendent William Taylor told City Council members when he approached them with his brainchild notion: "We wanted to make sure we allowed people to exercise their constitutional right to carry a firearm, but do it with a balanced, reasonable approach."

And Taylor, it seems, is just the guy to determine that this constitutional right to carry in a balanced and reasonable way is being upheld, because that's who City Council members named as the grader of all these papers.

"Chief Bill Taylor has sole authority when it comes to deciding which gun permit essays make the grade," Inquisitr reported.

The background of this policy, which also includes a mandate

that approved permit carriers attend firearms' safety and training classes at their own expense – up to \$1,100 – is that Lowell has maintained a tight control on guns for decades, denying most all concealed carry permit applicants for the past 30 years or so. So this new gun control provision is actually being billed as a freedom.

Local authorities also say applicants don't actually have to write the essay, but doing so would certainly strengthen their appeals for permits.

Well, isn't that special. So Lowell citizens have not only been suffering under Second Amendment dings for decades, but now, in some sort of Twilight-Zone-meets-George-Orwell doublespeak scenario, they're going to be voluntarily forced to beg local officials in writing for their already-guaranteed constitutional rights – and in so doing, subtly acknowledge that this a move toward freedom?

As Jim Wallace with the Gun Owners Action League of Massachusetts said in a statement: "It is absurd. ... It's like having a college professor say, 'I'm going to read your essay and if I don't like it, I'm going to give it back to you.'"

Who made the police the gate guard for the Second Amendment? As one freedom-loving patriot said of the topsy-turvy aspect of the situation: "Did the chief of police write an essay to the City [Council] explaining why he and his police force should have the right to carry?"

Indeed. But those who laugh at that question are part of the problem.

In America, where rights come from God, not government, that simple question goes to the nuts and bolts of the tragedy of Lowell's gun policies. Citizens, in far too many communities and in way too many cases of constitutional issues, have become conditioned to believe those in the public arena, the tax-paid servants, are above the very laws they are trusted to enforce – that they themselves are the sources and lone arbiters of rights and authorities.

The Second Amendment, based on the view of human rights the Founding Fathers all shared, is clear: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Nowhere does it speak of essays and grades and chief of police powers to determine who may carry firearms, and who may not.

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GOP controlled congress gave Obama legislative action power on guns

Loretta Lynch's Mind-Boggling Bend of Truth on Obama's Unilateral Gun Control

Boy, what a neat trick this is.

President Obama tells the American public he's going to bypass Congress on gun control and instead, issue some unilateral commands. One of his leading lying ladies, aide Valerie Jarrett, follows that, to paraphrase, by spinning, 'Oh, don't be silly, Obama's not really bypassing Congress – he's just issuing executive orders.' And now we've got an entirely disingenuous U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch taking to Capitol Hill to say: Obama's taking executive action – true. But it's really not really, truly executive action. Why not? Because Congress already gave him authority, via the Gun Control Act, to take these executive actions – and as such, they're not really, truly executive actions.

Well, shut the front door. Suddenly, Obama's much-hated executive actions on gun control have become legislative

actions.

And the added political genius for this far-left White House? They're not just legislative actions. They're Republican legislative actions – since Congress, after all, is controlled by the GOP.

As the Grateful Dead might say, when it comes to Obama's unconstitutional seizure of powers and his team's subsequent rationalization of said seized powers: What a long, strange trip it's been.

Only scratch the "long." Obama's spin only took a few weeks. Look at what Lynch just told members of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, with a straight face: "The Gun Control Act lists the people who are not allowed to have firearms, such as felons, domestic abusers and others. Congress has also required that background checks be conducted as part of sales made by federally licensed firearms dealers to make sure guns stay out of the wrong hands. ... The actions announced by the president, which focus on background checks and keeping guns out of the wrong hands, are fully consistent with the laws passed by Congress."

By that logic, the president doesn't need a Congress at all. Think about it. What Lynch is saying is that if a law exists on a particular topic, then the president of the United States is free to run with that law in whatever direction his (or one day perhaps, her) personal agenda leads. The only standard to abide would be to show the executive action is "consistent" with the previously passed law.

Nobody knows for sure, but one count put the number of federal laws and regulations that could be criminally enforced somewhere in the vicinity of 300,000. Other estimates don't even try to count, suggesting to do so would be akin to numbering the sands of the sea. But if Lynch's view were to hold true – and if the president were constitutionally justified in taking any old previously passed law and adding to it as seeing fit – then the door seems wide open to dismiss all the members of Congress and send them home. Who needs them?

Not the president, who could then command and direct and order and dictate at will, so long as White House lawyers are able to make the case these commandments and directives are “consistent” with existing laws.

What an absurd argument. An executive order is an executive order is an executive order.

What a skewed argument. That it came from the mouth of our nation’s highest law enforcement official, the one who’s supposed to prop up the legal foundations of our federal government and stand firm on the side of justice and truth, is just evidence of the absolute wickedness of this current White House and of Obama’s chosen few.

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George Washington book ban a slippery slope of extremism

Scholastic, producers of children’s reading materials – and one of the leading companies of student publications for schools around the world – just pulled a picture book about George Washington and his slaves. Why?

The reasons are ridiculous.

“A Birthday Cake for George Washington,” released earlier this month, was painted as “sentimentaliz[ing] a brutal part of American history,” the Associated Press reported. In other words, the problem was the pages showed happy slaves – a smiling Hercules and his daughter, Delia, cooking up a celebratory cake for their master and owner, Gen. Washington. And the publisher said in a statement: That image just doesn’t cut it.

"The book may give a false impression of the reality of the lives of slaves and therefore should be withdrawn," Scholastic said.

Because slaves never smiled – never, never, not under any circumstances, ever? Okay. That's a viewpoint. But this is a book for first-through-third graders. For that age, everybody smiles – including animals and inanimate objects. Some of them even dance.. Can you say Disney's Beauty and the Beast? (Imagine the outrage if the smiling slaves in "A Birthday Cake for George Washington" did that. Or, look at it the other way and imagine the outrage if the father-daughter enslaved duo were instead presented as bare-backed and downtrodden, with bloody red whip marks stretched wide across their skeletal torsos.)

Regardless, censorship in this instance is not only unfounded – they're third-graders, for crying out loud. Plenty of time to instill their minds with the true horrors of slavery in grades four-through-12 and beyond. But, and this is true with all forms of censorship, it also presents a slippery slope.

Censor one book, what about another? That sort of thing. And in this case, the finger-pointing can indeed do a 180 and turn right back at the source, Scholastic.

What does a book about an 8-year-old boy named George who desperately wants others to see him as a girl, have in common with a cartoon-esque account of a Captain Underpants character who time travels to discover he's gay? That's right – they're both published by Scholastic.

"The world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books is heavily promoting a pro-transgender book designed for students as young as third grade," Life Site News wrote in September 2015, of "George," by Alex Gino, an author who paints himself as a 20-year activist for "queer and trans" issues.

So transgender and homosexuality for third-graders is okay; smiling slaves, not. Because ostensibly books on transgender and homosexuality promote tolerance while books on smiling slaves tap at a history most want to forget, skewed as it may

be.

Got it. Except, of course, there's this one little troublesome point with that rationalization. Censorship of such blatant and agenda-driven selectiveness reeks of Nazi Germany days. Remember Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler's propaganda man?

In 1933, Goebbels drew a crowd of about 40,000 – most of whom hailed from the collegee and intellectual camps, those who thought they knew best how Germans ought to be raised and taught – for a massive book burning by bonfire, in orderr to, as he termed it, “clean up the debris of the past.” How is that different from America's current infatuation with cleaning up the debris of our slavery past, tearing down monuments of Robert E. Lee, pressing to remove statues of Thomas Jefferson, demanding to obliterate evidence of Lee, Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson from Stone Mountain in Georgia? Now come the books – beginning with the elementary-leveel “A Birthday Cake for George Washington.” Beware the slippery slope; America is not Germany, but for the grace of God and the sanity of her people, could very well one day be.

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Why did our sailors bend their knees to Iran in the first place?

By now, most news-watchers around the world have seen the video clips or screen grabs of the surrender of 10 U.S. sailors to Iran's armed revolutionary guard, as well as the subsequent televised apology of the American identified by

Tehran's Press TV as the commander of the group.

But little has been said about the sailors' actions as they pertain to the Code of the U.S. Fighting Force. That's the doctrine that requires all members of U.S. military forces to take whatever steps necessary to oppose captors – to uphold, as it reads, the "Code of Conduct, which has evolved from the heroic lives, experiences and deeds of Americans from Revolutionary War to the Southeast Asian Conflict."

Frankly speaking, members of the U.S. military shouldn't be taking knees before their captors – shouldn't be leaning back with smiles against the walls of their places of capture – shouldn't be sitting in placid defeatism with forced hijabs or other un-American military garb upon their heads. And they definitely shouldn't be doing it while video cameras roll.

It's not just U.S. code that requires U.S. military forces, if captured, to "resist by all means available." It's not just U.S. code that states "when questioned" by captors, to give only "name, rank, service number and date of birth" and to "evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability," including making "oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause."

It's America's spirit that ought to compel the same.

Seeing members of the United States military, the greatest fighting force on the face of the Earth, in a state of submission, defeat and humility before armed rag-tags is a disgusting commentary on the sickened spirit of our country. What happened to the notion of never surrender? What happened to the surprised waking of the sleeping giant?

Where are the George Pattons of our generation?

Surrender has no place in America's military – whether speaking of declared war or tool of propaganda. Americans. Don't. Surrender.

Gen. Jack Keane, the retired four-star general of the U.S. Army and former Vice Chief of Staff for the Army, hinted during a Fox News broadcast interview the sailors' behavior and response to Iran's aggression was going to be part of the

ensuing investigation. He said, in broadcast remarks: “[The apology was] not an apology from the United States government, that’s an apology from the youngster who’s trying to protect his crew, and his behavior will be held accountable for in any investigation to determine whether that was justified or not.” Good. An investigation into the whole fiasco, from Iran’s possible failures to uphold international laws to the U.S. sailors’ actions while in custody, is certainly warranted. But really, any investigation that doesn’t focus on the actions of the White House under President Obama these past years will prove second-rate. If Obama wasn’t such a weak leader, if Obama didn’t hold Iran as morally and politically equivalent to Israel, if Obama hadn’t insisted on an nuclear deal with Tehran that much of the rest of the world saw as a dangerous cave – those U.S. sailors never would have been put in the position of taking knees before representatives of the regime.

No U.S. sailor apology would have followed.

The weakness and ineffectiveness of Obama emboldened Iran to take these sailors captive. And now these sailors’ actions, whether in line with military code and the spirit of America or not – and the video, sadly, would seem to suggest “not” – are still only further evidence of the lacking respect the United States has experienced under its feckless commander-in-chief. It’s Obama who deserves the most scrutiny, and the harshest judgment.

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Obama tears? Watch the video;

my bet's on menthol

Watch the video. President Obama wasn't crying during his announced executive actions on gun control – he was faking.

The production opens with Obama speaking of unalienable rights and the pursuit of happiness and how those high-schoolers at Columbine and first-graders at Newtown, Connecticut, were deprived, due to lost lives from gun violence. He pauses several seconds, stares, repeats the phrase, “first-graders.” Obama then stares directly into the lens – right into the eyes of the American people – as the cameraman hones in slowly for a tight, cropped shot of his face.

“And from every family who never imagined their loved one would be taken from their lives by a bullet from a gun,” he continues, pausing once again.

Suddenly, Obama raises a hand, extends a finger, wipes his left eye, and the American public is transfixed at this sudden show of emotion. Is Obama crying? Is he shedding tears?

Stop video. Rewind. And look.

Obama doesn't just flick his finger at his eye. He wipes downward, across the lid, and then runs his finger along the whole bottom rim, following the line of the lashes. Then he blinks eight or so times.

But here's the part to notice at this point: His eye is dry. Completely devoid of tears; completely lacking dampness. Yet Obama's supposedly wiping away tears.

Click play.

Obama then pauses, lowers his head, and with hand cupped, thumb and forefinger bent, partially covers his mouth, once, twice – classic tells of lies – then shakes his finger for emphasis and speaks again..

“Every time I think about those kids it gets me mad,” he says, reaching up and wiping the corner of his other eye, the right one, with a quick motion.

Finally, a tear drops out of that right eye and slides down

his cheek. He turns his head slightly and viola, at last, his left eye is now wet all around.

Mission accomplished. Camera's got the shot. Time to move on to policy. Almost as fast as the tears came, they disappear, and Obama's next words – after a mention of violence in Chicago – are scolds for those in Congress and on the streets of America to support his agenda.

"So all of us need to demand a Congress brave enough to stand up to the gun lobbies' lies," he says, wiping the dry space below his now-clear eyes again. "All of us need to stand up and protect our citizens. All of us need to demand governors and legislators and businesses do their part to make our communities safer – demand something better."

He wraps with another wipe to the dry skin beneath his right eye.

Curtain fall. Exit, stage right. Bow and applause. So how'd he do it – hoow'd Obama manage the tearful performance?

The article "How to Cry – An Actor's Guide to Crying and Tears" sheds some light, explaining some of the methods the professionals use to drop teardrops on demand, within 60 seconds or so. The first suggested method, tapping into "memory driven tears," requires the actor to be "very in touch with his or her past" in order to select a prior experience that guarantees the waterworks. The second asks the actor to tap into personal fears, and dredge up tears that way.

"Both of [these] techniques ... take a lot of imagination, emotional awareness and mosst of all, diligent practice," the article states.

I think we can rule out those methods for Obama.

Next recommendation: "Be in the moment," the article suggests. Given all the pauses for special effect, head dropping reflection and eye-blinking drama Obama underwent, no doubt he was feeling the moment – but was in the momeent enough?

"Unfortunately," the article goes on, "there is a problem with the 'Be in the Moment' technique. It does not work in every play. What if you have to cry, but you personally don't 'feel' it?"

Given the American public has not seen Obama cry before – not after the Newtown shootings, or the Columbine murders, or the other gun-related acts of violence that he says makes him feel so despondent – it's probably a safe bet Obama wasn't feeling it as much as he humanly could. Not enough to drop real tears on demand, anyway. After all, he didn't earn the label as a cold and detached leader for nothing. And he was making a pressure-filled nationally televised appeal to take unprecedented action for something he held dear to his legacy. So this brings up the tricks of the Hollywood trade.

"Although some movie stars utilize some of the techniques mentioned above, many actors opt for an easier solution: menthol," the article concluded.

And that's where my money rests – on a dab of Vicks vapor rub or similar menthol-laced product slid along the lid and bottom of an eye. The pungent fumes, combined with Obama's practiced "Be in the Moment" rhetoric and reflections, jumpstarted the tear in his right eye; the tears from his left, fueled by the actual sting of the menthol, then fell fast and unfettered.

"A menthol tear stick and menthol tear producers are tools of the film and theater trade," the article states. "The stick version requires a sparse application under the eyes ... [and] produce[s] immediate results."

Like I said, watch the video. Pause. Rewind and play again.

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Lie Czar Valerie Jarrett

spins: Obama's not bypassing congress

Valerie Jarrett, who's seemed to have jumped into the role of Lie Czar for this week's White House public relations sell – supplanting perhaps Susan Rice, of “blame Benghazi on a video fame” – donned her anti-truth shield and took to national TV to showcase her skills and tell the watching public: My boss, President Obama, isn't really bypassing Congress by issuing executive orders for gun control.

That little thing called executive order? Don't mind that. Them's just words.

“Let's be specific,” she said, in a broadcast interview in the lead-up to Obama's issuance of his not-bypassing-Congress-but-still-coming-unilaterally order. “The president is not circumventing Congress.”

And with that, the straight-faced Jarrett skewered through the definition of executive order itself – as if the American public were that stupid.

Why is this administration so bent on bending the truth?

Scratch that. That answer's obvious – to grab power and control at all costs. But understanding the motive doesn't make it any less maddening. Perhaps the better question is: Why are there so many in this White House with such careless regard for the truth?

Wordplay is an art with these guys, so much so that entire websites have been created to keep track of Team Obama's spin. Remember White House press secretary Jay Carney? Well, he's got his own “9 Top Lies” website. Another of the old gang, Stephanie Cutter, former campaign spin-meister for then-candidate Obama, even sparked her own hashtag – #FireLiarStef. What a proud moment for the elder Mrs. Cutter that must have been. Obama alone has several websites dedicated to tracking his lies, most notably by the Pulitzer Prize-winning PolitiFact, a site that can hardly be pointed to as right-wing

propaganda but that nonetheless found double-digit cause to ding the president over the years (don't forget to scroll to the next pages at the bottom of the link). And we're still trying to sift through the lies and deceptions and cover-ups and so forth of Obama's first administration. Think Hillary Clinton and her whole "what difference at this point does [the truth] make" moment. Think again the previously mentioned former national security adviser Susan's Rice sad and despicable parrot squawks of You Tube videos sparking terrorism, followed by her equally sad and despicable characterization of U.S. Army deserter Bowe Bergdahl as "honorable."

It's been a busy couple of administrations. Unfortunately, it shows no signs of letting up. Obama isn't going to grow a conscience any time soon. His hand-picks aren't going to fly the proverbial straight arrows. His White House assemblage isn't going to suddenly right its tipped moral compass. And most specifically, Jarrett isn't going to admit her shamelessly presented shameful spin on words is all fallacy, aimed at confounding an already confounded public.

More of the same – that's all we can expect from this president and this White House these next 12 months.

So what's a fed-up patriot to do? Take heart. Fisher Ames, a Founding Father with considerable oratory skills, is said to have remarked: "Our liberty depends on our education, our laws and our habits – it is founded on morals and religion, whose authority reigns in the heart, and on the influence all these produce on public opinion before that opinion governs rulers."

And with that in mind: The election's coming.

The president's leaving, and with him, his team of skilled skewers of truth. It's not that the incoming commander-in-chief, either Democrat or Republican, will be perfect followers of the "I will not tell a lie" way of thinking. But chances are, the voters are so fed up with the easy lying this administration does, the next White House chief to be elected won't be half as bad – meaning, not HHillary – and the change

on Capitol Hill won't be one of just mouths, rhetoric and politicking, but also heart, morals and religion.

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New year, same Obama: there's gun control to demand

New Year, new executive order. That's how President Obama's ringing in 2016 – with a robust toast to his own power and hubris, and simultaneous glass tink and eye wink at the Second Amendment.

By the middle of January, Obama will have made his move, most political watchers say. And what a move it will be. As Bloomberg Business reported: "Obama has let it be known from his holiday retreat in Hawaii, through unidentified advisers, that soon after New Years' Day, he plans to follow through on plans to expand the definition of who's 'in the business' of selling firearms – and who's thus required to perform background checks."

That means if you want to sell your gun to your neighbor, under Obama's new order, you'll need to first pass an executive-mandated background check from the federal authorities. And I say executive-mandated because the policy won't be congressionally approved. This so-called closing of the gun show loophole – where dealers who sell commercially are currently subjected to the federal background checks' process, but not those who sell from their own personal collections' is Obama's pet, through and through.

It's yet another presidential bypass of Congress, the duly elected, the electorate, and by extension, the Constitution. Call it the Obama Special – the pen and phone approach to

governance – the modern day way of legislating in America. How long must we suffer? Obama's bully politics are birthed of a nation that's turned from God – and when God doesn't lead, look out. Government will. And it'll be with heavy hands. That's what we're experiencing in rapid fashion under this current administration. Can't pass immigration reform? Call in the executive order. Can't get Congress to agree on climate change policy? No problem-o. Pick up the pen and push environmental regulations and dictates for the federal government to follow and businesses to abide. Then press the EPA to ram through those same executive desires. Can't move reforms on Capitol Hill to control police and halt perceived biased policing against blacks? Call on the Justice Department to initiate a plan that basically federalizes civilian, community police departments via a carrot-stick, funding-for-data-collection dictate.

It's amazing what a president can accomplish these days. That's why Sen. Rand Paul's legislation limiting the president from passing executive orders that curb the Second Amendment is so interesting, not to mention timely. His bill, the Separation of Powers Restoration and Second Amendment Protection Act, S. 2434, not only relegates such executive orders on gun control to "advisory" status, meaning no action can occur unless Congress first considers and approves it. It also allows those who are negatively affected by any executive action against guns to file a civil lawsuit "to challenge the validity of [the] executive action," the text of the bill states.

It's currently on fast-track status, with a hoped-for Senate hearing right after the holiday recess. And Paul introduced it with this fanfare: "In the United States, we do not have a king, but we do have a Constitution. We also have a Second Amendment and I will fight tooth and nail to protect it."

Indeed he will. In fact, indeed he has. Paul introduced the same legislation in 2013, as S. 82. And guess what happened? After Sens. Mike Lee and John Boozman signed on as cosponsors

– the only two to do so – the bill headed for the Senate for a first reading, then a second reading, and then death due to inaction.

So Paul's pulled the draft out of his desk for another try. Well, good for him. Thumbs-up and gold stars all around, as well as a heartfelt hope the bill will actually pass this time.

But when any politician, well-meaning or otherwise, tries to tell the American public that the United States does not have a king, the proper response is to laugh. Why? It's wisdom in motion. One need only look to Obama to see how far our Constitution has shifted – and how long-gone our notion of a constrained executive branch has drifted.

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