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PR FIRM NEEDED TO REP VIRGINIA SPIRITS

The Virginia Spirits Board is seeking proposals from agencies that can provide marketing, promotion, education and consulting services.



The VSB is looking for an agency to develop and execute a fully integrated marketing and branding program that enhances the image and reputation of the Virginia Spirits industry.

Scope of the work includes developing a strategic marketing plan; conducting website, social media and electronic marketing; maintaining and building trade, industry and media relations; organizing trade and media events; developing and managing various Virginia Spirits Board marketing programs; and monitoring VA distilleries.

Terms of the contract call for a commitment from February 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, with the option to extend for up to four one-year renewals. The budget for the initial 2023-2024 contract is \$900,000.

Proposals are due by 2:00 p.m. (EST) on Friday, December 9, and should be mailed to: Commonwealth of Virginia; Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Procurement Office; 102 Governor Street, Rm. 240; Richmond, VA 23219.

Bidding agencies should include one original hard copy and three copies of their proposals.

Questions should be emailed to Kevin Steinbrecher, Kevin.steinbrecher@vdacs.virginia.gov.

[Download the RFP \(PDF\).](#)

FTI WORKS DC FOR PHILLIPS 66

[FTI Consulting](#) is providing DC representation to oil giant Phillips 66 on matters related to the Inflation Reduction Act, infrastructure, sustainability and the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy.



Mark Lashier, Phillips CEO, told the Texas Oil & Gas Association's Lone Star Energy Forum on Nov. 16: "The problem facing the world today isn't a

choice between fossil fuels and alternatives but rather a mix of oil and gas, alternative energy and technologies, such as carbon capture and storage. It's all hands on deck."

He said while the oil and gas industry is focused on the right things, "the world doesn't always understand that."

Bryan Zumwalt, who heads FTI's government affairs unit, heads the firm's five-member Phillips 66 team.

EDELMAN PUSHES PANAMA'S PR

[Edelman](#) is providing communications support to Panama's Ministry of Commerce and Industries under an agreement capped at \$97,100 per month.

Working as a subcontractor to Squire Patton Boggs, Edelman will offer strategic counsel and handle media relations, stakeholder identification & engagement and content development duties.

Everett Eissenstat, North American chairman of Edelman Global Advisory, is working on the Panama business. He joined the independent PR firm in March from General Motors, where he was senior VP, global public policy.



Everett Eissenstat

Jere Sullivan, international chair of EGA, program managers Hanna Rudorf and Jack O'Shea, and senior A/E-digital Luis Felipe Betancourt Silva round out the Panama team.

MICI hired Squire Patton Boggs to engage with US government officials, think tanks, business communities, media and the public as part of a comprehensive program to enhance its outreach in DC and strengthen Panama's ties with the US.

SEN. SCHUMER SPOKESMAN JOINS SKDK

Justin Goodman, communications director for Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, has joined SKDK as an EVP in its DC public affairs practice. He will handle corporate, PA and crisis communications clients.

Having served Schumer and the Democratic Senate caucus for about a decade, Goodman operated "in the most intense, high stakes public policy and political debates of the day," according to Jill Zuckman, SKDK partner.

Most recently, he promoted landmark bills such as the Inflation Reduction act, CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan.



Justin Goodman

Zuckman said Goodman's "deep bench of press relationships will be invaluable to the clients and causes we work for."

Before working for Schumer, Goodman handled press for the New York City Council and the Clinton Global Initiative.

He is the fourth Schumer alum to join SKDK. Goodman follows Josh Isay (CEO), Mike Morey (Partner), and Jason Kaplan (SVP) to SKDK, which is owned by Stagwell.

POSITIVE MESSAGES KEY TO RETIREMENT PR

A focus on the positive is key to successful communications about retirement issues, according to a new study from investment managers Capital Group and market research firm Escalent.



“[The Art of Retirement Communications](#)” found that negative language, such as warnings of potential mistakes or phrases like “time is running out,” was the least likely to

connect with consumers. For example, only about a quarter (24 percent) of respondents said the phrase “unexpected expenses can derail you” resonated with them.

Messages that center around successful planning or on a comfortable retirement were considerably more appealing. One message focused on planning (“Plan the retirement you deserve”) was deemed appealing by 44 percent of respondents—with 42 percent saying that such a message would encourage them to take action.

Envisioning a secure retirement ranked even higher. Almost half (48 percent) were drawn in by “save enough today to enjoy a comfortable future,” with 45 percent noting that such a statement would encourage them to take action.

Sticking to the facts was also a plus, with factual statements resonating across all demographics considerably more than product-related messages.

Each generation has different expectations of what they want from retirement communications, the study says. An emphasis on planning means more to Millennial and Gen X than to Boomers, who prefer messaging that centers on enjoying retirement and the immediate steps they need to take to get there.

Millennials also said that they found the imagery used in retirement-related communications to be generally unappealing (“they mostly notice Boomers and then tune out”). They also wanted to see “images showing modern use of devices for planning.”

Boomers, on the other hand, expressed a desire to see images that they find empowering. They also resent “being portrayed as confused or at the mercy of a complex industry.”

The study also found a risk of relying too heavily on images. Noting that “the significance that individuals ascribe to an image is deeply personal,” the study authors note that an image that may hit the mark with some audience segments may be totally off base for others.

Surprisingly, images representing inclusivity did not register particularly well with respondents. While respondents said they want to see diversity in communications, such images were less cited as less likely to encourage them to want to prepare for the future, want to save more or want to create a plan. Language stressing inclusivity also missed the mark, with phrases like “strategies for every life and stage” only connecting with four out of 10 respondents.

Jargon-filled language was cited as another barrier to successful retirement communications. “Understandable language is often more reliable than imagery to relay a message,” the study notes.

But the most important feature of successful retirement communication, is to keep a focus on both outcomes and planning. “To prepare for retirement, people need to be able to envision the end result.”

The Capital Group/Escalent study polled 2,451 from a mix of ages, genders and race/ethnicities in Q4 2021.

ON THE MOVE

Kite Hill PR hires **Charlyne McWilliams** as SVP. McWilliams comes to Kite Hill from the William Mills Agency, where she served as senior director. Before that, she held several roles as a business journalist, including working as editor for the Inside Mortgage Finance Publications and as a business reporter at the *Roanoke Times*. At Kite Hill PR, McWilliams is playing an active account management role, spearheading professional development for Kite Hill PR employees and leveraging her network in the firm’s business development efforts.



Charlyne McWilliams

Brunswick Group names **Sunitha Chalam** head of its Singapore office, effective January 1. Chalam succeeds Will Carnwath, who becomes co-lead of the firm’s healthcare and life sciences sector team. Chalam joined Brunswick in 2015 and has worked in both the Singapore and Hong Kong offices. Before joining Brunswick, she was director, public affairs at Hill+Knowlton Strategies.

Brandon promotes **Courtney Olbrich** to media director. Olbrich has been with the agency since 2015, most recently serving as director of digital strategy. As media director, she will lead the strategic media planning and execution of campaigns for all clients and manage the media department’s day-to-day operations.

Lambert hires **Doug Kuiper** as chief of staff. Kuiper joins the agency from Ilitch Holdings where he was chief communications officer, leading communications for such brands as Little Caesars, the Detroit Tigers and the Detroit Red Wings. He was previously senior vice president of marketing and communications with Michigan Economic Development Corporation. At Lambert, he will work to optimize internal operations, drive and integrate complementary mergers and acquisitions, and bring new products and services to market.



Doug Kuiper

The American Marketing Association, which has local chapters in more than 70 cities and 350 college campuses throughout North America, appoints **Bennie F. Johnson** as chief executive officer. Johnson most recently headed up the American Institute of Graphic Artists. He was previously chief strategy officer for the Council of Better Business Bureaus.

Kiterocket, a Seattle-based firm, names **Amy Cunningham** managing director of its Sustainable Living Practice. Cunningham joins Kiterocket from Columbia Hospitality, where she served as senior director of marketing. In her new role, she is collaborating with and offering strategic counsel to renewable energy companies, as well as clients in the food and agriculture industries.

Tripadvisor, the world’s largest travel guidance platform, brings on former Shutterstock chief marketing officer **John Boris** as its CMO. Boris has also served as executive vice president and managing director of the U.S. business for Lonely Planet Americas. At Tripadvisor, he will have direct responsibility for the platform’s B2C and B2B marketing strategy and execution.

HOW TO MAKE A FINTECH BRAND STAND OUT

The phrase “fintech” will turn 30 next year, along with Beanie Babies, Sleepless in Seattle, Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, Animaniacs, the Food Network and NAFTA. While some of these things have aged better than others (remember [the couple who contentiously divided their Beanie Babies in divorce court?](#)), there is no doubt that the ubiquitous adoption of fintech over the last three decades has fundamentally transformed our lives.



Kristina King

Today, the challenge for brands at the crossroads of finance and technology is not defining what fintech

means, but finding new ways to differentiate their brand from the stiff competition within the space. In today’s highly competitive ecosystem, brand differentiation is more crucial than ever for fintechs looking to attract talent, investors, partners, clients or consumers. So where to begin?

Start with Empathy and Center the End User

Fintech has transformed the way we relate to each other, from ride-shares to person-to-person payment platforms and dating apps, so it’s no surprise that winners in the fintech vertical today are companies that differentiate themselves by employing an empathetic, user-first model.

Recent research shows that an empathetic approach to business is more than just a feel-good manifesto—it offers tangible benefits to the bottom line. A global study by M&C Saatchi found that 18 percent of consumers stopped using a brand in the past 12 months because of the gap between the product as marketed and their lived experience, costing the average brand over \$300M in lost revenue yearly.

Whether a company is B2C or B2B, delivering a compelling user experience with empathy at its core helps differentiate the brand and drive industry goodwill, media sentiment, investor appetite, and even employee engagement. In today’s volatile market conditions, developing a positive and well-differentiated brand reputation has never been more important.

Volatile Market Conditions Can Inspire Creativity

At first glance, it looks dark out there. Publicly traded fintech companies have dropped 50 percent since last November. The median valuation of late-stage American fintechs that raised money in the first quarter of 2022 was 58 percent lower than in the last quarter of 2021. Even venture capitalist appetite is smaller, with a recent CB Insights report finding U.S. fintechs raised \$13.3 billion during Q1 2022, a 27 percent decline compared with that same period in 2021.

The good news? Creativity loves constraints, as Marissa Mayer wrote for *Bloomberg Businessweek* in 2006, and differentiation is nothing if not an exercise in creativity. For fintech companies looking for new ways to set themselves apart from the competition under today’s perceived or real constraints, differentiation must thus be creative, compelling and just a little bit contrarian.

The Communications Status Quo Must Go

Putting out a whitepaper or report that says nothing new in 10,000 words or more won’t help a brand make the headlines, even if it ticks a box on marketing’s KPIs for the year. Brands must resist the urge to maintain the status quo and instead do what it takes to go against the grain and differentiate the brand within today’s fintech sea of sameness.

Neobank trying to increase financial literacy? Skip the advertorial and instead create a free-to-play Dungeons and Dragons module that teaches tabletop gaming players the basics of financial literacy in a fantasy roleplaying setting. Drop the whitepaper and get (Second) Chance the Rapper to give refurbished iPhones a second chance as educational tools for older adults learning how to bank online (and give their grandkids a digital concert to inspire brand affinity in future decision-makers too). If bigger campaigns aren’t in budget, look for opportunities to create a custom data survey that can reveal a human truth related to core brand offerings or inspire consumers to think differently about their own behavior.

Creative communication programs can be created and executed at any budget—and in today’s market it’s more crucial than ever for fintech brands to challenge the way things have always been done and instead find new ways to leapfrog the competition in both product quality and brand perception.

Leverage Public Relations to Close the Gap Between Perception and Reality

Ultimately, even if a fintech offers the best product, service or technology in the world, the path to success will remain out of reach even for the most scalable of companies if no one knows the brand’s name or where to learn more.

Ensuring brand messages are delivered consistently across all communications channels is the bare minimum in today’s world—brand messages must also be differentiated in several key ways. To recap: 1) a stellar user experience must be matched with a stellar communications program; 2) volatile market conditions demand creative, compelling and contrarian differentiation; and 3) the fintech brands that challenge the status quo in their communications programs to deliver strong, succinct and differentiated market-relevant messages are the ones that will win in the long term.

Fintechs ready to stand out and succeed in today’s market and capitalize off the long-term continued growth of the industry must identify, celebrate, and clearly communicate their differentiators while aligning communications priorities with business outcomes.

Kristina King is a vice president at [FINN Partners](#).

UNIV. OF IOWA WANTS PR FOR BIZ SCHOOL

The University of Iowa is accepting proposals from firms to run a PR program for its Tippie College of Business.

Established in 1921, Tippie awards bachelor of business administration degrees in finance, economics, management, accounting, marketing and business analytics/information systems.

The selected firm will have experience in developing thought leadership (preferably at the dean level) and possess a track record in placing stories in national and academic media across the scope of earned media outlets (print/digital/radio/TV/podcasts).

The RFQ also calls for media training workshops, both individually and in groups, for faculty.

The firm will prep faculty about how to talk to journalists, write op-eds and pitch outlets, such as the *Harvard Business Review*, to reach academic peers.

The work will begin in January and run through mid-May. Responses are due December 7.

[Read the RFQ \(PDF\)](#).



BOJO AIDE MOVES TO BRUNSWICK GROUP

Mark Sweeney, who worked in the government of former UK prime minister Boris Johnson, will join Brunswick Group as a partner on Dec. 5.



Mark Sweeney

He will handle crisis management, public affairs and reputation matters.

As director general in the cabinet secretariat, Sweeney advised Johnson on economic, domestic policy issues and the legislative agenda.

Earlier, Sweeney was director general for policy, communications and analysis at the Ministry of Justice and a director at Ofcom, the independent telecom and broadcast regulator.

He also worked for a number of years in the Northern Ireland Office on the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

CARIBBEAN TOURISM ORG. SEEKS PR BOOST

The Caribbean Tourism Organization wants to book a firm for a strategic communications program to position it as the leading tourism development agency in the region.

The selected firm will develop thought leadership opportunities for CTO's top officials, handle media engagement, coordinate a comprehensive digital communications push to expand the organization's reach and manage any PR crisis.



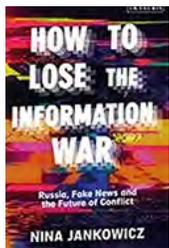
Barbados-based CTO wants a partner with a tourism/ government relations background, a track record of achievement in the Caribbean and knowledge of the region's English, French, Dutch and Spanish-language media.

Responses are due December 1 and go to Sharon Banfield-Bovell at banfields@caribtourism.com and copied to Marvelle Sealy at msealy@caribtourism.com.

[Read the RFP \(PDF\).](#)

UK DISINFORMATION CENTER HIRES US REP

Nina Jankowicz, a disinformation expert and founder of Sophias Strategies in Arlington, has signed on to work the US media for the London-based [Centre for Information](#)



[Resilience.](#)

She is the author of "[How to Lose the Information War: Russia, Fake News and the Future of Conflict](#)," published in 2020.

CIR is a non-profit social enterprise focused on countering disinformation, documenting human rights abuses and combating online harms against women and minorities. It receives funding from the UK government including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Jankowicz, who inked a one-year contract with CIR in September, has worked with reporters from the *Washington Post*, NRP, Connecticut Public Radio and Radio Free Asia.

She provided input on Russian disinformation both in the Ukraine war and ahead of the US midterm elections, commented on the G20's condemnation of Russia, and discussed tools to scrub personal information from the Internet for online safety.

She also engaged on social media (Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) as a CIP representative.

GAUGING THE WORLD CUP'S REPUTATION RISK

FIFA is having no end of trouble resulting from its choice of Qatar as the site of this year's World Cup.

Budweiser, a \$75-million corporate sponsor, learned suddenly that it couldn't sell its product at the games—except for the one without alcohol—and the German team has already lost a sponsor, Rewe, over a ban of the "One Love" armband.

In a statement, Rewe, a multinational grocery chain, announced they had ended their fourteen-year relationship with the German FA as it no longer wanted to be associated with FIFA after the world governing body's decision.

"FIFA's scandalous attitude is absolutely unacceptable for me as the C.E.O. of a diverse company and as a football fan," Rewe's chief executive, Lionel Souque, said in comments reported by *Der Spiegel*.

Why would FIFA choose a Muslim country with the population of Charlotte, N.C., and ruled by a hereditary emir for the biggest, most heavily publicized and media-covered event of the century thus far?

At best, it is poor risk assessment. At worst, it is FIFA doing what FIFA does—traveling the low road of greed and corruption, social and political sensibilities be damned.

If you are a PR person with a seat at the proverbial table, for goodness sake, do the homework on the reputational risk to your company or brand. If the results are negative or unpromising, stand up and argue against, no matter how much the marketing wallahs pooh-poo your concerns or dismiss your arguments.

Budweiser has decided to give away the beer it had been barred from selling, and bit the bullet with this tweet: "New Day, New Tweet. Winning Country gets the Buds. Who will get them?" and a picture of a large quantity of beer in a storage warehouse.

Meanwhile, if a rainbow appears over Lusail Iconic Stadium (no pretension like Middle Eastern pretension, eh?) during the finals, will Qatar shut down the match?

Bill Huey is president of Strategic Communications and the author of Carbon Man (Kindle, 2010).

GILMARTIN, CANALE WORK IMAGO DEAL

Gilmartin Group and Canale Communications represent Imago BioSciences, which has agreed to be acquired by Merck for \$1.4B.

The South San Francisco-based company is a clinical-stage biopharma that develops treatments for bone marrow diseases.

"This agreement leverages Merck's industry-leading clinical development expertise to maximize the therapeutic potential of bomedemstat, which is currently in Phase 2 trials, while providing important value for shareholders," said Dr. Hugh Rienhoff, founder/CEO of Imago.

"This acquisition of Imago augments our pipeline and strengthens our presence in the growing field of hematology," added Robert Davis, Merck CEO.

Gilmartin Group's Laurence Wells handles the investment community for Imago, while Canale Communications' Ian Stone works the media.



COLORADO MESA UNIV. NEEDS AGENCY

Colorado Mesa University is seeking an agency that can provide marketing, communications and public relations services.



The Grand Junction-based public university, which was founded in 1925, counts more than 9,000 students across three campuses. Formerly known as Mesa State College, the college rebranded in 2011 and changed its name to Colorado Mesa University after attaining university status.

CMU is looking for an agency that can contribute to its annual marketing campaigns and help the university boost growth and elevate brand awareness and perception among prospective students living in Colorado as well as out of state.

Scope of the work includes reviewing and developing marketing materials and other creative assets, refreshing CMU's brand and style guide and developing a media planning, purchasing and placement strategy.

The contract calls for an initial term of one year, with the option to renew for up to 4 four annual one-year terms at the University's discretion.

Proposals are due by 11:00 a.m. (MST) on December 5 and should be submitted proposals electronically through the [Rocky Mountain ePurchasing \[RMEPS\] portal](#).

[Download the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

NEWS OF FIRMS

Allied Global Marketing, a global agency that works with entertainment, culture and lifestyle brands, relaunches its experiential offering as Allied's Brand Experience division. The division will be led by former Honey+Buzz co-founders Jonny and Paddy Davis, who will serve as executive vice presidents. Honey+Buzz, an experiential marketing agency, was acquired by Allied in May 2021. Since then, the Davis brothers have been fully integrated into Allied's experiential team by working with the US offices to service such clients as Amazon, Hulu, DreamWorks, Princess Cruises and Hermes, while continuing to grow the business internationally.



Cision acquires **Factmata Limited**, a social and news media monitoring and analytics product that uses AI to identify and track narratives online through articles, blogs, tweets and other social chatter, highlighting the ones that could either help or hurt

brand reputation and value. "The acquisition of Factmata is a critical step in Cision's mission to empower communications and PR professionals with AI and narrative detection technology," said Jay Webster, Cision chief product & technology officer and Cision Comms Cloud president.

Taylor launches "Shapers of Possibility," which is redefining its vision as a purpose-driven firm. As part of the new initiative, the agency has rounded out its strategy and creative practices with a diverse group of strategists, data analysts, copywriters, art directors, designers and production specialists. The team holds traditional, digital, social, experiential, and PR experience as well as multicultural, multi-lingual and global communications expertise in over a dozen marketing-related disciplines.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

TiCKER, the shareholder loyalty and direct-to-shareholder marketing platform of **Lambert Global**, signs on to work with **Lionsgate** on launching the Shareholder Red Carpet Rewards program, which is aimed at increasing retail shareholder engagement with the studio's portfolio of film and television brands and franchises. The program will offer such perks as Lionsgate commemorative shareholder certificates featuring the company's movies & television series, a 50 percent discount on a full-year subscription to global streaming platform STARZ, discounts on movie tickets in partnership with Atom Tickets and discounts on a broad range of Lionsgate events, experiences and merchandise.



BLAZE PR is named agency of record for **Bike.com**, an online marketplace for bicyclists. BLAZE is tasked with raising awareness of the brand in the US market. The agency came on board earlier this year to launch both the brand and its line of Denago eBikes. "It was immediately apparent that they are committed to the needs of their clients and provide a custom approach to each project," said Bike.com CEO Dave Duecker.

One & All is named agency of record for **USA Swimming**, the national governing body of swimming in the United States, and **USA Track & Field**, the national governing body for track and field, long-distance running, and race walking. The agency will lead the organizations' collective sponsorship sales efforts heading into the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. One & All will develop sponsorship marketing materials, programs and strategies for the joint sales effort.

FINN Partners picks up **Tru Earth**, a global zero-waste household cleaning products company committed to eradicating plastic containers. FINN will deliver integrated marketing strategy and activation, including creative campaign development, PR communications, product sampling, CSR and social good engagement, thought leadership and partnership support. Tru Earth offers biodegradable, ultra-concentrated cleaning strips for laundry, surfaces, and toilets, with more new products on the horizon before year-end.



Clarity lands business psychology consultancy **Pearn Kandola**. The agency is working with Pearn Kandola to raise the organization's profile and boost awareness of its diversity & inclusion services and digital solutions. Based in Oxford, UK, the consultancy's clients include private, public and voluntary sector organizations in the UK and globally, including BT, HSBC and Cisco. "The Clarity team impressed us right away with their creativity and comprehensiveness," said Pearn Kandola marketing manager James Hatcher.

Marino adds **Happy Munkey**, a New York City-based cannabis lifestyle and culture brand, and **Campoamor & Sons**, a full-service consulting firm, to its roster of cannabis clients. For Happy Munkey, the agency will promote CEO and founder Vladimir Bautista as an authority on New York's cannabis industry and support the brand's entry into the recreational market. Marino will work to position Campoamor & Sons, founded by Jesse Campoamor, a veteran political operative and cannabis equity advocate, as a leading consultant for various issues, including cannabis licensing.

COMMENTARY



Musk welcomes Trump distraction... Elon Musk ended the 22-month suspension of Donald Trump from Twitter based on the results of a poll of Twitter users.

C'mon. That's pretty rich coming from a guy who railed against the huge number of spam accounts on Twitter as he tried to weasel out of his \$44B agreement to acquire the social media platform.

Elon may have been right.

Musk, on Nov. 22, decided to postpone the relaunch of Twitter Blue because his crackerjack engineering team still doesn't have a handle on ridding the platform of impersonators.

He had planned to unveil a secure Twitter Blue on Nov. 29 after the disastrous rollout earlier this month.

Elon's \$8 verified blue check mark drew scores of imposters.

A fake Eli Lilly account announced free insulin, while a phony George W. Bush account "missed killing Iraqis."

Though Twitter is besieged by impersonators, fake and parody accounts, Musk is welcoming Trump back to the platform based on the results of a very dubious poll.

The people have spoken, Musk said of the poll.

He's just blowing smoke. Musk is clueless about who or what voted for Trump.

He's letting the former president back on the platform to spread misinformation, lies, conspiracy theories and political attacks because he wants the MAGA crowd on Twitter.

Trump's next to last tweet on Jan. 8, 2021:

"The 75,000,000 great American Patriots who voted for me, AMERICA FIRST, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, will have a GIANT VOICE long into the future. They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!"

Blowhard Trump provides a welcome distraction for Elon from his 24/7 job of trying to right a sinking ship.

Department of Bad Timing. Politico Live has postponed its inaugural Crypto Summit that was slated for Washington's Long View Gallery on Dec. 1.

The move follows the implosion of FTX Group and the rumblings of its co-founder Sam Bankman-Fried that sent shockwaves through the cryptocurrency ranks.

FTX's lawyer told the bankruptcy court on Nov. 22 that "a substantial amount" of its assets are missing and may have been stolen.

"FTX was in the control of inexperienced and unsophisticated individuals and some or all of them were compromised individuals," said James Bromley, who was brought in by the company's new management.

Politico promised presentations from the leading voices driving the crypto policy debate, networking opportunities with influencers, virtual platforms and appetizers and drinks at a reception following the Summit. It sounded swell.

Crypto Summit 2022 is morphing into a yet unscheduled Crypto Summit 2023.

The New York Times hedges bets... The paper ran a massive front page Nov. 20 story that covered three full pages inside the about the spread of legal gambling across the US in the aftermath of the 2018 Supreme Court ruling that declared the federal ban on gaming was unconstitutional.

Americans placed an average \$8B a month on legal sports bets vs. less than \$1B per month three years ago.

The Times warned that the rapid rise of online sports betting has radically changed how millions of people consume sports and enabled them to legally engage in potentially addictive behavior from the comfort of their living rooms.

On page 34, the Times ran its weekly pro football column outlining the day's games and providing the points spread of each contest.

Columnist David Hill, who handicaps the games, warned prospective bettors about the extreme weather conditions, which could increase the number of turnovers. "So the best bet when facing a game where the weather is predicted to involve 'thundersnow' might be to not bet at all," he wrote.

Hill is not exactly a guru. Prior to the Nov. 21 line-up, his record is 76-71-3

The Times also helps readers interested in getting in on the betting action via a handy primer about "how betting lines" work.

It looks like the paper is doing its part in getting people hooked on sports betting.

Anti-Woke Bank Takes a Nap... GloriFi, the Texas-based digital bank, profiled by the *Wall Street Journal* as an institution that touted what it called pro-American values such as capitalism, family, law enforcement and the freedom to celebrate your love of God and family without the fear of cancellation, is kaput.

It announced on Nov. 21 that its leadership has "come to the heartbreaking conclusion that we need to begin winding down the company's operations."

GloriFi blamed a series of startup mistakes, reputation attacks, a declining economy and multiple negative media stories for its shutdown.

The bank contrasted itself to the money center giants like JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup that are all-in on environmental, social and governance principles.

GloriFi founder Toby Neugebauer believed Americans yearned for a bank that embraced conservative values.

He targeted customers who played football at "Friday Night Lights" and felt disrespected by the big banks.

GloriFi billed itself as a "marketplace for the movement" and urged people to put their money where their values are.

Its advertising railed against corporate elites telling you what to think, woke companies that are denigrating this great country, big government, big news and everything that challenges your freedom.

The anti-woke bank thought it had a potential market of 100M people but Glorifi is now GloriDied. —Kevin McCauley