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The Inside News of
PR and Marketing
Communications

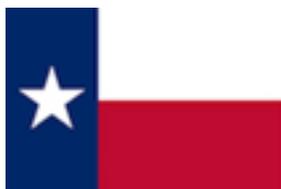
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TEXAS TARGETS MEXICO FOR TOURISM RFP

Texas wants to attract more visitors from Mexico to the Lone Star State to bolster a tourism sector that supports more than 1.2M jobs.

The Office of Governor Greg Abbott wants a firm to handle PR and marketing services in Mexico to develop messages to help grow awareness and visitation to Texas, according to its RFP.



The desired PR firm partner will monitor editorial calendars of Mexican media outlets and pitch story ideas via phone, email and in-person meetings. It must maintain "a fully operational physical office, located in Mexico."

Budget and fees are not to exceed \$320K for the first 11 months of the effort. Texas will award a contract covering Oct. 14, 2019, through August 31, 2020. There are three additional 12-month renewals.

Spencer Cummings (spencer.cummings@gov.texas.gov) will handle questions about the RFP until Sept. 6.

Send the proposal, five hard copies and electronic file (PDF, CD or USB drive) via US mail to: Office of the Governor; Financial Services Division; Attention: Spencer Cummings; P.O. Box 12878; Austin, TX 78711-2878

The proposal and envelope must be entitled: "Proposal Submitted for RFP 301-9-0798," due Sept. 27 at 5 pm (CST).

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

PHELPS, DICLEMENTI NOW VIACOMCBS EXECS

ViacomCBS, the company being formed from the merger of CBS and Viacom, named Julia Phelps executive vice president, chief communications and corporate marketing officer and Anthony DiClemente executive vice president, investor relations.



Julia Phelps

Phelps has been executive vice president, communications, culture and marketing at Viacom since April 2017. She will lead the combined company's corporate communications, corporate marketing, corporate responsibility, special events and internal creative teams.

DiClemente has been executive vice president, investor relations for CBS since June. In his new role, DiClemente will coordinate and oversee outreach strategies to the investment community. He will also work to refine the combined company's corporate strategy and competitive positioning.

PORT OF VANCOUVER FLOATS PR RFP

The Port of Vancouver (WA) is looking to hire a firm to help bolster its PR, advertising and marketing efforts. The one-year budget is between \$300K to \$500K, according to its RFP.

Located on the Columbia River, the Port handles more than eight tons of cargo (wheat, minerals, liquid bulk and vehicles) per-year.



The Port wants a partner to work with staffers to develop and implement an overall PR campaign, pitch stories and establish relationships with marine and industrial trade media; provide media training and crisis communications work on as-needed basis, and develop a social media strategy using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Business-to-business marketing experience is essential, and experience within the shipping/port industrial is ideal.

Proposals are due Sept. 25.

They go to: Port of Vancouver Administrative Office; 3103 NW Lower River Road; Vancouver, WA 98660; Attn. Rick Cline, Contracts Manager

Cline also is taking questions at rcline@port-vanusa.com.

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

ICR PUMPS UP PELOTON'S IPO

ICR Inc. is handling media surrounding New York-based Peloton Interactive's \$500M initial public offering.

In its Aug. 27 Securities and Exchange Commission filing, Peloton says it has "a loyal community of over 1.4 million members."

The company claims it "pioneered connected, technology-enabled fitness, and the streaming of immersive, instructor-led boutique classes to our members anytime, anywhere," according to the Form S-1.



Peloton suffered a \$196M net loss on \$915M in revenues during fiscal 2019 ended June 30. Sales of its bike and treadmill generated 78.6 percent of sales with subscriptions accounting for the bulk of the balance.

It believes "it is still in the early stages of growth in our existing markets," having sold about 577K of its bikes/treadmills of the 14M units in its targeted market.

CEO John Foley, who founded Peloton in 2012, expects to raise brand and product awareness via "television, digital, and social media marketing, as well as our showrooms and word-of-mouth referrals."

ICR's Jessica Liddell is working the Peloton IPO.

CMOS BEARISH ON COMPANY CAPABILITIES

Many chief marketing officers believe their organizations are coming up short in terms of qualities they view as paramount for a brand's success, according to a recent survey by London-based PR and ad group Dentsu Aegis Network.

According to the survey, 85 percent of CMOs say an ability to identify big, creative ideas that build emotional connections with consumers is critical to a brand's future success, but only slightly more than half (54 percent) believe they're currently delivering on these capabilities.

A similar proportion (83 percent) cited the importance of seamless customer experiences across channels, though only 60 percent believe they're executing this capability adequately.

Finally, 84 percent of CMOs view data collection and management as necessary in driving customer insight, though only 49 percent think they currently deliver well in that area.



Additionally, fewer than half (43 percent) of CMOs think their agencies currently do a good job of providing fully-integrated solutions across all aspects of the marketing mix, and only slightly more than a third (36 percent) believe their agencies are good at business partnering in an effort to achieve long-term goals.

A majority of CMOs polled (50 percent) cited securing long-term investment as the number-one internal challenge they face when attempting to deliver on their marketing strategies. This was followed by an inability to transform their business quick enough (46 percent) and a lack of integration across all elements of the customer experience (41 percent). A lack of internal talent (40 percent), insufficient control over a company's digital investments or programs (36 percent), a lack of integration from the marketing agencies they work with (28 percent) and competing agendas with other C-suite leaders (27 percent) rounded out the list.

Dentsu's "CMO Survey 2019" polled 1,000 CMOs globally from a range of industries across ten global markets: Australia, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. The survey was conducted in May.

BRIGNONI JOINS SUBJECT MATTER

Subject Matter has brought on Yolanda Brignoni as vice president of client services. Brignoni comes to the agency from the AARP, where she led integrated communications campaigns and crisis response for its health initiatives and campaigns. She was previously communications director at the United Nations Foundation and an account supervisor at Ogilvy Public Relations.



Yolanda Brignoni

"Yolanda deepens the experience of our client service team and brings an important skill set centered on strategic campaigns and high-profile events that are increasingly in demand by our clients," said Subject Matter founding partner Paul Frick.

MEDIA MANEUVERS

Yankee Global Enterprises is partnering with **Sinclair Broadcast Group** and **Amazon** to acquire the 80 percent of the **YES Network** currently owned by The Walt Disney Company, in a deal with an enterprise value of close to \$3.5 billion. Yankee Global Enterprises already owns 20 percent of the network. Jon Litner will remain in his existing role as YES Network president. YES broadcasts games, programs and specialty content for the New York Yankees, Brooklyn Nets, Major League Soccer's New York City FC and the WNBA's New York Liberty. Sinclair also recently closed a \$10.6 billion deal to buy 21 regional Fox Sports networks from Disney.



Covering Climate Now, a project co-founded by *Columbia Journalism Review* and *The Nation*, has signed up more than 170 news outlets. The project, which aims to strengthen the media's focus on the climate crisis, is led by CJR editor and publisher Kyle Pope and *Nation* environmental correspondent Mark Hertsgaard. Participating news outlets have committed to running a week's worth of climate coverage in the lead-up to the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York on Sept. 23.

Jason Miller, who served as chief spokesman during Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign and the subsequent presidential transition, then worked as a CNN correspondent, has lost his defamation suit against Gizmodo Media Group, according to a story in the *Hollywood Reporter*. Miller sued Gizmodo for \$100 million over an article posted on Gizmodo's Splinter news site. Miller was represented by Bajo Cuva Cohen and Turkel, a law firm that represented wrestler Hulk Hogan in his successful case against Gawker Media, which ultimately led to the sale of the company at a bankruptcy auction.



Jason Miller

Overall salaries for magazine editors are holding steady, but the gender gap in the field still stubbornly persists, according to Folio's annual salary survey, which was released Aug. 27. The study found that female editors-in-chief received an average base salary of \$82,500 annually, while their male counterparts were paid an average of \$100,000. At the associate editor level, the disparity is even more pronounced, with women being paid about 76 percent as much (\$54,000 per year) as men (\$70,500).

The paywall that came down at *The Atlantic* 10 years ago appears to be going back up. Atlantic president Bob Cohn told the *Wall Street Journal* that the publication will launch a metered paywall in January. Readers will be able to access 10 articles per month for free, after which they will need to pay for access. Laurene Powell Jobs, who acquired a majority stake in the publication in 2017, postponed the previously announced paywall, focusing on beefing up the headcount and content before asking readers to pay up.

DON'T TAKE MY WORD. LISTEN TO BILL GATES

Bill Gates, one of the great technology entrepreneurs of our time, is credited with saying: “If I had one dollar left, I’d spend it on PR.”



Thomas Butler

Over the years of speaking to some of our different clients, CEOs or other C-Suite thought leaders about defensive or aggressive strategic agendas and professional servicing budgets, I would’ve loved to have suggested, don’t take my word for it, just listen to the advice of Bill Gates! If only it was that easy.

Last year, our firm had the opportunity to onboard a new clean chemistry technology firm. Its patented innovation has the potential to revolutionize fire science and the massive struggle much of the Western U.S. and Europe have had in containing wildfires.

The strategic messaging shaped for that start-up, its CEO and earned media in many markets across the nation, propelled them into the arms of waiting private equity investors competing to have a piece of the potential next “can’t miss” market innovation. We all win when the client embraces collaboration.

Just recently, in a call with that same CEO, we went over their growth plans, possible acquisitions and customer accounts that appear to be on the runway.

The CEO recognizes that by deeply engaging with and utilizing strategic communications and public relations counsel for more than just earned media, corporate shareholder interaction and social marketing, the company and its core principles get the added eyes, ears and instincts of practitioners with years of experience.

When clients simply won’t listen

I’ve also experienced the opposite side of the spectrum, when the client is simply not tuned into to taking anyone’s advice.

As a young practitioner I accompanied the founder and CEO of a well-known commercial brand to federal court for his guilty plea. He had apparently “left off the last-S for savings,” a refrain from his well-worn TV commercials, but in this case, it was for failure to pay taxes.

The hearing and aftermath seemed to go according to plan, until he saw a TV crew at the front and rear door of the courthouse. He panicked, forgot about our prepared public statement and sprinted for a taxi instead. He gave the news just what they wanted: A new lead story. Instead of a considered and serious response, cameras captured a CEO sprinting away from them. His investors, franchisees and corporate team regretted his actions right away.

In February, I read in Bloomberg News about a startup delivery company whose recent round of funding valued the company at \$7.1 billion. The company was in the news for purported wage theft, by deducting and keeping tips given by customer through its app, which were intended for delivery drivers. The company’s co-founder and CEO then told Bloomberg, “It’s unfortunate that the activities of others have mischaracterized what we’ve been doing for two years.” He then continued to defend their business model, saying, “There was no coverage of this (scandal) two years ago.”

How could a company, with such technological promise, growing market share potential and significant investors be so imprudent and allow themselves to get in such a reputational bind?

Perhaps because by May the company continued to welcome more investors as its valuation reached \$12.6 billion. Does that mean the company’s problem and accusers went away?

July came and so did a star *New York Times* investigative reporter, who went undercover for six days as a delivery person for this company and three of its competitors, including Uber Eats and Seamless. The journalist’s story confirmed and chronicled similar wage theft, as was alleged months earlier.

In the world of Twitter, tens of thousands of news feeds—including those belonging to its competitors—are now jam-packed with harmful messaging that will certainly have an impact somewhere along the line. Elected leaders in the cities where they do business are now also aggressively denouncing their business practices, promising investigations and legislation to mandate tighter regulations and strict penalties.

Importance of C-Suite communications collaboration

I’d prefer to contrast that regrettable case study with a smart, forward-looking client call I received this past winter while I was away on a family vacation. My phone rang and it was a longtime client, the Chair and CEO of a financial firm. Her call and questions related to something that her company would likely not be taking action on, or even announcing, until perhaps the fall of that year, more than six months into the future. She respected and valued our opinion and thoughts.

The message to us from the leader of the company was, you’re a valued partner and earned a seat at the table, but it also served as a fresh reminder to put on our thinking caps, and study all of the pertinent communications matters or examine if any pitfalls exist on the path to the company’s continued growth and success.

In many cases, the road to long-term agency and corporate partnerships can begin at the crisis stage. It’s a time when the actions of true communications professionals can have tremendous value on a company, its executive leadership or its brand value.

I’ve been fortunate throughout my career to have many smart and remarkable CEO-leaders who have allowed us to be an integral part of their team. They include the leaders of large pension funds, corporate shareholder activists, banks and Wall Street firms, municipal comptrollers, serial-entrepreneurs and—unfortunately for them—a few corporate leaders under the duress of litigation or corporate restructuring, who called on us to help them navigate through tough times.

It’s my opinion the ideal client relationship is one where the company brain trust works closely and collaboratively with their communications team leadership. And that the CEO who can successfully recognize and entrust their ideas and vision to the communications team will benefit shareholders, channel partners and customers via a superior reputation and brand experience.

Thomas Butler is President of Butler Associates, LLC.

TRUMP-CONNECTED CAPUTO REPS SOMALIA

New York State Republican operative Michael Caputo, who heads Caputo PR, has signed on as public affairs/lobbying firm for Somalia. Caputo led Donald Trump's GOP primary campaign in The Empire State and went on to lead communications for caucus operations at the Republican Convention.



Michael Caputo

He will promote progress made by the Somali government in the areas of security, political inclusiveness and financial management.

Caputo's Somalia effort is via Zeppelin Communications, where he is managing director. He worked with Zeppelin founder George Petrushin at the Florence Group, PR firm in Moscow. Petrushin also opened the Zeppelin nightclub in Russia's capital city.

Caputo also is a good friend of Somalia president Mohamed Mohamed who had fled Somalia, attained asylum in the US, became an American citizen, enrolled at the University of Buffalo and got involved in GOP politics in western New York.

He returned to Somalia and successfully ran for president in 2016. Upon taking office in Feb. 2017, Mohamed renounced his US citizenship.

NOGUCHI MOVES TO BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has named Chieko Noguchi PA director of the Washington-based organization. Noguchi will succeed Judy Keane when she starts the job on Sept. 9.

Noguchi was at the Archdiocese of Washington, where she was named director of media and PR in 2011.

She was spokesperson for the disgraced cardinal and DC archbishop Donald Wuerl, who was accused of covering up sexual abuse while he was bishop of Pittsburgh.

Pope Francis accepted Wuerl's resignation in October 2018. Wuerl said his exit would allow the church to focus on healing and on the future.

Prior to working for the Archdiocese, Noguchi handled travel for former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and worked at Porter Novelli and Ketchum.

PRECISION STRATEGIES HIRES MARGOWSKY

Precision Strategies has added Miranda Margowsky, who was deputy communications director for Democratic Senator Debbie Stabenow, to its roster.



Miranda Margowsky

Margowsky was also a spokesperson for the Michigan Senator's 2018 re-election run and previously press secretary for Congressman Xavier Becerra, who is now California's attorney general, and Henry Cuellar of Texas.

Stephanie Cutter and Jen O'Malley Dillon, deputy campaign managers of President Obama's reelection effort, co-founded Precision.

O'Malley is currently campaign manager for Beto O'Rourke's quest for the Democratic nod for president.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

BackBay Communications has been chosen as the PR agency of record for **Big Path Capital**, which specializes in impact investing—investments made with an eye toward generating a measurable, beneficial social or environmental impact alongside a financial return. BackBay will work to raise awareness of Big Path's impact investing events and its work with companies, funds, and investors. Impact clients that BackBay has worked with include Economist Events, for which BackBay provided support for this year's Climate Risk Summit in London and Investing for Impact Conference in New York.

5W Public Relations has been named agency of record for **SparkBeyond**, an artificial intelligence powered problem-solving platform. 5W PR will work to educate the public on the company's capabilities, including their ability to optimize clinical trials, increase crop yield and fight fraud. SparkBeyond says its platform discovers complex patterns, as well as identifying root causes and drivers of business outcomes. It works with partners in such corporate sectors as insurance, finance, pharmaceutical, life-sciences, CPG and retail.

Global Results Communications has initiated AOR relations with clients including **Advanced Energy Industries**, **Valera Screens** and restaurant chain **Wahoo's Fish Taco**. For each client, GRC will provide strategic counsel, writing services, storyboarding and thought leadership. Program elements will include speakers programs, awards, events and earned media.

NEWS OF FIRMS

Shirley & Banister Public Affairs organized a successful campaign for **Citizens for Responsible Solar** that resulted in German-based Cricket Solar withdrawing its application to erect a complex of solar panels on 1,600 acres of farmland and Civil War battlefields in Culpeper County, Virginia. The campaign was directed by SBPA chairman Craig Shirley, vice president Kevin McVicker and account executive Francesca Goerg. SBPA arranged for an opinion poll to be conducted, which revealed overwhelming community opposition to the complex.

Ketner Group Communications has opened an office in Nashville, a move it says is intended to bolster its relationships with the area's emerging business-to-business tech players. The Austin, TX-based firm also opened an office in New York City earlier this year. Ketner's Nashville office is led by Kirsty Goodlett, who previously worked as account manager at the agency from 2014 to 2017. She will lead several key accounts while developing business relationships in Nashville's tech scene.

Richmond, VA-headquartered **NDP** has launched Neathawk360—a media solutions division that will provide such services as media planning and buying, analytics, measurement and reporting, as well as digital marketing and creative design. The division's 17-member team, housed in its main office, includes media planners, analysts, scrum masters, project managers, developers and media buyers.



SD UNIVERSITIES SEEK MARKETING AGENCY

The South Dakota Board of Regents, the governing board that controls the public higher education system in South Dakota, is looking for an agency that can develop a promotional marketing proposal for the half-dozen public universities the Board governs.

The Board seeks a marketing proposal—utilizing appropriate media, branding, logos and campaigns—that promotes the value a postsecondary education at South Dakota’s six public universities can deliver.

Scope of the work includes marketing and branding strategies for the SD public university system (which may include, but isn’t limited to, marketing and branding activities via television, print, digital media and social media); promoting the value of public postsecondary education in South Dakota; and analysis of the SDBOR website and offering recommended upgrades.

Terms of the contract begin after Oct. 11 and will continue for three years, with an option to renew for another term which may not exceed three years. Budget for the work can’t exceed \$700,000 over a three-year period.

Proposals are due by Sept. 23 and should be mailed to the following address: South Dakota Board of Regents; RFP #SDBOR1803 – Janelle Toman; 306 E. Capitol Avenue, Suite 200; Pierre, SD 57501-2545

All bidding agencies should enclose one original and one identical copy of their proposals, as well as an electronic copy provided on a flash drive. The words “Sealed Proposal Enclosed” must be prominently written on the outside of the package/envelope.

Deadline for questions is August 30 and should be sent via email to buyer Janelle.Toman@sdbor.edu, with the subject line: “RFP #SDBOR1803”

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

BALLARD COVERS BALLAD HEALTH IN DC

Donald Trump-connected Ballard Partners is handling rural healthcare issues for Johnson City, TN-based Ballard Health, which was formed in 2018 by the merger of two hospital companies serving the Appalachian region.

The Federal Trade Commission opposed the marriage of Wellmont Health System and Mountain States Health Alliance, which serve 1.2M people in northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia. The deal went forward under Tennessee’s Certificate of Public Advantage instrument, which let the partners sidestep federal scrutiny.

The FTC held a workshop on June 18 to hear from people who believe patient care has declined in the region since Ballard was formed. It also examined the impact of states’ COPA on the quality of healthcare, access, service and price.

Ballad released a statement Aug. 2 on the FTC workshop. It pitched the merger as a way to combine resources, reduce duplications, achieve efficiencies and improve services in a rural area beset by a declining population and filled with sicker/poorer people than those who live in densely populated areas

Brian Ballard, who was president Trump’s chief fundraiser in Florida, and Syl Lukis, head of Ballard Partners’ DC office, handle the Ballard push.



FACEBOOK ENLISTS CRYPTOCURRENCY HELP

Facebook has hired Washington-based lobbying firm FS Vector in light of increased Congressional and regulatory pushback the social media network has received over its planned cryptocurrency offering, Libra.

Facebook formally unveiled the details of its planned blockchain digital currency initiative in June, which could potentially bring the world’s “unbanked” billions into the digital economy by allowing anyone to securely buy, sell or send money to others via Facebook. The proposed digital currency, which has yet to meet regulatory approvals, is set to launch sometime next year.

House Financial Services Committee Chair Maxine Waters (D-CA) in June called for a moratorium and Congressional review of Facebook’s Libra project, “given the company’s troubled past.”

President Trump raised concerns about Facebook’s proposed cryptocurrency as well, tweeting in July that “if Facebook and other companies want to become a bank, they must seek a new Banking Charter and become subject to all Banking Regulations, just like other Banks.”



FS Vector partner John Collins leads the Facebook account. Collins formerly served as vice president of international policy at the American Bankers Association’s international subsidiary, the Bankers Association for Finance and Trade.

NEWS CORP. MULLS RUN AT GOOGLE NEWS

News Corp is in the planning stages for a news-aggregation service to compete with Google News, Facebook and other digital platforms, according to a report in its *Wall Street Journal* property.

Knewz.com, as the website and mobile app are expected to be called, would link readers directly to the sites of the publishers whose content is featured, with News Corp taking none of the ad revenue generated.

Publishers featured on the platform are to include the Journal, as well as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and NBC News.

Also included would be a range of smaller outlets that News Corp says are often pushed down in Google’s search results and Facebook’s social feed.

ON THE MOVE

W2O has named **Dan Linton** to lead its expanded global data privacy group. Linton has served as managing director, analytics at the agency since 2017. Before coming to W2O, he was global digital analytics manager at Intel Corporation. He has also worked as group director, digital marketing intelligence at marketing and advertising firm Cardinal Path and marketing science group director at Critical Mass.

42West has hired **Jodie Magid Oriol** as a vice president in its New York entertainment marketing division, according to a report on The Wrap. Oriol comes to 42West from PMK-BNC, where she was vice president, talent, repping clients that included filmmakers Marielle Heller and Aaron Sorkin. She was previously senior vice president, theatrical publicity at Lionsgate.

COMMENTARY

Can you imagine an America led by a president who believes the country needs “more reporters covering the healthcare crisis, climate emergency and



Bernie Sanders

economic inequality” rather than a multitude “of TV pundits paid tens of millions of dollars to pontificate about frivolous political gossip, as local news outlets are eviscerated.”

Would you support a commander-in-chief who understands that “real journalism is different from the gossip, punditry and clickbait that dominates today’s news.”

Do you want a president who stands tall against “corporate conglomerates and hedge fund vultures that have bought and consolidated beleaguered local newspapers and slashed their newsrooms—all while giving executives big payouts?”

Are you eager for a president who wants to revitalize journalism so that every working reporter doesn’t have to face “six people working in public relations pushing a corporate line?”

Wouldn’t it be refreshing to live in a nation, where the head of state doesn’t spend his/her time “demonizing journalists when they dare to debunk his lies” or trashing them as “enemies of the people” “in a deliberate attempt to destroy the very idea of a free press.”

Do you agree that: “We need to rebuild and protect a diverse and truly independent press so that real journalists can do the critical jobs that they love and that a functioning democracy requires.”

If so, read Bernie Sanders’ “plan for journalism” op-ed that ran in the *Columbia Journalism Review*.

The Vermont Senator believes the founding fathers understood that a robust and independent free press is vital to democracy.

He warns: “More than two centuries after the constitution was signed, we cannot sit by and allow corporations, billionaires and demagogues to destroy the Fourth Estate, nor can we allow them to replace serious reporting with infotainment and propaganda.”

White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham may be lying low these days, but she’s got potential to be enshrined in the Trump administration’s Communications Hall of Shame.

Grisham appears ready to give counselor Kellyanne Conway, who was elected to the Hall of Shame on the first ballot, a run for her money.

Conway quickly made her mark on the DC commu-

nications scene when she famously spun then-press secretary Sean Spicer’s whopper about the size of the crowd who attended Donald Trump’s 2017 inauguration.

The crowd-sized obsessed Twitter-in-Chief ordered Spicer to the podium to say that Trump drew “the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period.” That statement stretched reality beyond the max.

Conway hit it out of the park by telling Chuck Todd a day after Spicer’s laughable whopper that the hapless press secretary was presenting “alternative facts.”

When challenged by the “Meet the Press” host, Conway said Todd’s job was “not to call things ridiculous that are said by our press secretary and our president. . . . That’s why we feel compelled to go out and clear the air and put alternative facts out there.”

Bingo. She’s been dishing out heaping plates of alternative facts (e.g., lies) ever since.

Compared to Conway, media-shy Grisham, who took the White House job in late June, is a slow starter.

Washington Post style reporter Paul Farhi reported Aug. 28 that during the two hours that he spent interviewing Grisham at a DC restaurant two blocks from the White House, not a single person approached the table to chat or argue. “No one, it seems, knew who she was,” he wrote.

Despite that anonymity, Grisham reached for the rarified atmosphere enjoyed by Conway’s “alternative facts” nonsense when she told Farhi the president never lies.

Apparently, Grisham doesn’t view as lies Trump’s 12,019 false or misleading statements documented by WaPo’s Fact Checker.

She told Farhi: “I think the president communicates in a way that some people, especially the media, aren’t necessarily comfortable with. A lot of times they take him so literally. I know people will roll their eyes if I say he was just kidding or was speaking in hypotheticals, but sometimes he is. What I’ve learned about him is that he loves this country and he’s not going to lie to this country.”

My hunch: you bet the media aren’t comfortable dealing with the lies, distortions, exaggerations and false statements that flow from the mouth of the president.

The press secretary apparently believes the media and Americans aren’t supposed to believe that the president means what he says and says what he means.

Conway must be very, very proud of Grisham. She’s got a bright future in the Trump White House.

—Kevin McCauley



Stephanie Grisham