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CALIFORNIA STRAWBERRIES SEEK PR BOOST

The California Strawberry Commission is gathering proposals from firms to provide integrated PR, social media and marketing services to establish a positive emotional connection between consumers and strawberries grown in the Golden State.



CALIFORNIA STRAWBERRIES

The effort will elevate the reputation of farmers with consumers, community leaders and residents in the strawberry production regions of California. The outreach targets English- and Spanish-speaking moms in their 20's through 40's, and registered dietitian nutritionists, specifically members of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics.

The Commission, which represents more than 400 farmers, shippers and processors, has budgeted \$400K to \$600K for the communications effort.

Responses are due Aug. 31. They go to jreinman@calstrawberry.org.

[Read the RFP.](#)

EX-CUOMO AIDES EXIT KIVVIT

Rich Bamberger and Josh Vlasto, former aides to disgraced and departing New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, have left their managing director jobs at Kivvit.

"We agreed to amicably part ways," they told [the New York Post in a joint statement](#).

Bamberger and Vlasto were members of the governor's "inner circle" of advisors that worked to fend off accusations of sexual misconduct, according to the report from New York attorney general Letitia James.



Rich Bamberger, Josh Vlasto

Melissa DeRosa, who resigned as Cuomo's secretary earlier this month, testified that Vlasto came up with the idea to leak the personnel files of Lindsey Boylan, a sexual harassment accuser, to the press.

The AG report claims Bamberger helped gather signatures for a letter that impugned the credibility of Boylan, suggesting that she was working with supporters of then-president Trump.

Bamberger was Cuomo's communications director from 2008 to 2012. Vlasto was deputy communications director and chief of staff from 2011 to 2014.

Kivvit managing director Tom Meara told the Post that Bamberger and Vlasto acted in "their personal capacity" when they advised Cuomo. The firm is the home of managing partner Maggie Moran, who was Cuomo's campaign manager for his reelection primary.

WALKER SANDS ACQUIRES MARCH

B2B marketing agency Walker Sands has acquired Boston-based tech PR firm [March Communications](#).

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

In light of the acquisition, March will henceforth be known as March, a Walker Sands company. The firm, which also has an Atlanta office, is headed by Martin Jones. He will now report to Walker Sands CEO Mike Santoro.

Together, the combined entity counts 170 employees across five offices (Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, Boston and Atlanta).

Chicago-based Walker Sands, which was founded in 2001, accounted for more than \$20 million in net fees last year, according to O'Dwyer's rankings of PR firms. The agency counts Ensono, Hub Group and Globant as clients.



Mike Santoro

FINN PARTNERS PICKS UP GRENADA TOURISM

[Finn Partners](#) has picked up North America PR duties for the Grenada Tourism Authority following a competitive pitch for the Caribbean nation.

Virginia Sheridan, managing partner of Finn's travel & lifestyle practice, is responsible for raising the visibility of the tri-island destination of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and differentiate it from other Caribbean vacation spots.

The firm will use a mix of media relations, special events, promotional activities, partnerships and thought leadership programming to highlight Grenada's personality and its many offerings for discerning travelers.

Petra Roach, CEO of GTA, called Finn Partners "a leading force in the travel and hospitality industry."

She joined the GTA in April following a 27-year run at Barbados Tourism Marketing.

Roach said it is "critical that we not only continue to share our story of Grenada and its multi-faceted offerings but also, that we educate our visitors on our protocols and the health and safety measures that we continue to implement to ensure their safety."

[Finn Partners ranked No. 3](#) on O'Dwyer's roster of travel PR firms with \$10.4M in fee income in 2020.



PURE GRENADA

The Spice of the Caribbean

OMNICOM FIRMS TEAM WITH PARALYMPICS

[FleishmanHillard](#), Porter Novelli and Portland have teamed up with the International Paralympic Committee and adam&eveDDB to launch a global campaign aimed at putting people with disabilities at the heart of the diversity, equity and inclusion agenda. The coalition of Omnicom agencies is working with the IPC on a pro bono basis to support the campaign's launch.

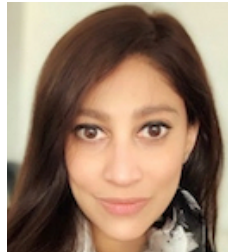


#WeThe15

The initiative, #WeThe15, takes its name from the 15 percent of the global population who have a disability. Supported by a coalition of 20 organizations—including UN Human Rights, UNESCO and the International Disability Alliance, The Valuable 500 and Special Olympics – the campaign launched just ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, which mark the start of a 10-year campaign to advance the lives of the 15 percent with disabilities. FleishmanHillard is providing strategic counsel and global media relations support; Porter Novelli has managed all macro influencer and celebrity ambassador outreach; and Portland provided political engagement in a range of markets, including the UK, France, Germany, North America and South East Asia, and led on developing the messaging narrative for the campaign.

EDELMAN VET ENGINEER MOVES TO TENEO

Teneo has hired Annika Engineer, who did a 15-year stint at [Edelman](#), as managing director for strategy & communications.



Annika Engineer

She exited Edelman in 2019 as executive VP, corporate reputation & crisis management.

At the No. 1 independent firm, Engineer handled issues including product recalls, antitrust, data breaches, behavioral misconduct and matters across the reputation risk and crisis lifecycle.

Engineer joins Teneo from Real Chemistry, where she was practice leader for corporate strategy & crisis management.

At the [No. 2 independent firm](#), she engineered thought leadership efforts for Takeda Business, served as client relationship lead for Johnson & Johnson and worked on client and non-profit vaccine hesitancy initiatives including pro-bono work for The Ad Council and Black Coalition Against COVID-19.

FGH WORKS KOHLBERG-MYERS EPS DEAL

Finsbury Glover Hering handles private investment firm Kohlberg & Co. and its acquisition of Myers EPS, the leading manufacturer of backup emergency lighting systems.

Based in Bethlehem, PA, Myers serves healthcare facilities, data centers, government buildings and warehouses.

Kohlberg is acquiring Myers from Graham Partners.

Myers CEO John Daly, who will continue to lead the company, is eager to partner with Kohlberg “for our next phase of growth as we look to expand our capabilities and enhance our ability to meet our customers’ needs.”

Based in Mount Kisco, NY, Kohlberg has raised \$12B in committed equity capital since it launched in 1987.

FGH, which is part of WPP, has Andrew Johnson and Sophia Templin working on the Myers deal.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

[Zapwater Communications](#) lands North America PR duties for **Ethiopian Airlines**. The firm will pitch the airline as the premier carrier when traveling to Africa. The agency will help manage Ethiopian's marketing and communications in North America, including media relations, influencer relations, strategic partnerships and events. Ethiopian currently services 62 cities in Africa and more than 127 international passenger and cargo destinations across five continents. Zapwater's engagement with the airline began in July and will be managed primarily out of the agency's Chicago office.



Merlot Marketing scoops up **Water, Inc.**, a distributor and supplier of water filtration and purification products, whole house water treatment systems, decorative plumbing and luxury appliances. The agency will lead regional and national public relations efforts, **key branding strategy and graphic design to support new product launches** and Water, Inc.'s existing catalogue of products. “We are excited to formally leverage their expertise in strategic branding and in developing meaningful relationships with the national media on our behalf,” said Water, Inc. vice president of sales and marketing Chris Arnold.

Hooray Agency signs on Salamander Hotels and Resorts as it launches The Family Reunion, an event which celebrates diversity within the hospitality industry. Hooray's work on the project will include digital media, collateral materials and signage, and online ticket platforms. Presented by author and Chef Kwame Onwuachi, the event is supported by a partnership between Food & Wine and Salamander founder and CEO Sheila Johnson. The four-day event will take place at the Salamander Resort & Spa in Middleburg, VA.

[Champion](#) picks up **Punchh**, which provides customer loyalty, offers and engagement solutions for restaurants, convenience stores and other physical retailers. The agency is tasked with developing brand narratives to generate positive local, national and trade media coverage for Punchh. It will also execute an omni-channel strategy to amplify Punchh's digital marketing objectives. “Champion has outstanding media and brand connections from coast to coast, so we're looking forward to a successful partnership,” said Punchh co-founder and CEO Shyam Rao.”

[Pietryla PR & Marketing](#) scoops up Surge for Water, a 501c3 non-profit that provides communities with safe water, sanitation, hygiene and menstrual health solutions. Pietryla will leverage both



online tools and traditional PR to help the organization raise the profile of its annual fundraising gala Sept. 18 at Salvage One in Chicago. Pietryla PR & Marketing president Christine Wetzler said that the work is “a good fit for us” as the agency strengthens its digital and social marketing capabilities.

Amendola Communications has been selected by clinical trial technology company **Curebase** to work on the launch of its Decentralized Clinical Trial software platform. Curebase says that the DCT model revolves around the patient's lifestyle, enabling diverse studies with broader patient populations. “We are excited to leverage Amendola, which brings a stealthy team, strategic healthcare IT expertise, and a long history of proven wins,” said Curebase founder and CEO Tom Lemberg.

ESG MARKETING IS NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL

Bank directors, CEOs and senior managers who believe the strong focus on corporate Environmental, Social and Governance policies and actions will fade as the COVID-19 pandemic eases may be risking the future of their enterprises and their own careers.



Steve Halsey

For years, titans of the oil and gas industry have eloquently addressed environmental concerns backed by token investments in alternative energy and vague promises to reduce their carbon footprints. This amounted to marketing lip service and window dressing while mainly conducting “business as usual.”

Investors now understand that climate risk is also a serious investment risk.

They know that broad-market high-ESG indexes are significantly outperforming low-ESG counterparts, according to MSCI and many others.

A global survey of institutional investors released by MSCI in February showed that 77 percent of investors increased ESG investments “significantly” or “moderately” in response to COVID-19.

Revisiting the four Ps

Corporate commitment to ESG can’t be feigned or taken lightly; there are too many eyes watching, reporting, rating or regulating every move.

ESG and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion values must be baked into corporate culture. It requires revisiting the traditional “four Ps” of marketing—Product, Packaging, Promotion and Place (distribution). The four closely connected Ps that count most with ESG and DE&I marketing are: Purpose, product, policy and people.

Company purpose

The rising importance of corporate purpose beyond profits started before the pandemic, but COVID-19 magnified its importance. According to the Page Society’s groundbreaking research in *The CCO as Pacesetter: What It Means, Why It Matters, How to Get There*, companies need to move beyond simply defining a corporate purpose to weaving it into the very fabric of the business.

Product and policy

Closely tied to purpose, product and policy in terms of ESG marketing starts with the company itself.

One ESG opportunity that some banks started implementing during the pandemic is the reduction of restrictive barriers to help dismantle systemic bias and build trust. Too many Americans today are unbanked or underbanked.

Many factors have made access to financial products and services challenging for segments of the U.S. population, which can create a negative impact on the financial stability and social mobility of large segments of the population. But they also represent a significant opportunity to broaden customer bases.

Is there risk involved? Certainly, but there are more than 72 million Millennials in the United States today, and most of them need to establish stronger credit ratings. Can any bank risk ignoring their needs?

People

The business case for a diverse, inclusive company is compelling. Research by McKinsey shows that the most ethnically diverse companies are 35 percent more likely to outperform the least ethnically diverse companies. According

to research from Glassdoor, 67 percent of job seekers said that a diverse workforce is an important factor to them when considering companies and job offers, and that 57 percent of employees want their company to increase diversity.

2020 was an inflection point for ESG

Previous economic crises have tended to reduce corporate emphasis on sustainability and social initiatives in order to focus on financial recovery and survival, but that did not happen in 2020. COVID-19 is a uniquely people-centered crisis compounded by uneven economic impacts and a surge in social justice efforts.

Corporate leadership is experiencing intensified interest in their ESG policies and actions by all stakeholders. Considering the overwhelming evidence that companies with high ESG ratings consistently and substantially outperform their peers across all industries, including banking, it’s a safe bet that smart ESG practices will remain important long after the pandemic has ended.

Steve Halsey is Chief Growth Officer at G&S.

NICE OR KIND: WHAT’S THE BEST CHOICE?

“It’s nice to be nice to the nice.” That’s what the Frank Burns character said during an awkward social encounter in a 1974 episode of *M*A*S*H*. Even though a hypocritical, less than competent TV doctor delivered the line nearly 50 years ago, it still makes sense. Right?

According to “[The Hazards of a ‘Nice’ Company Culture](#)” by Timothy R. Clark, “what’s touted as niceness is often nothing more than the veneer of civility.” He sees this as a danger to organizations because “in a nice culture, there’s pressure to go along to get along,” which “can lead to chronic indecisiveness.”

We’ve all seen it at some point; people want to be liked and will do almost anything to avoid conflict. Clark makes the case that niceness squashes “intellectual honesty, candid feedback, and tough questions.” And if we don’t address issues in a timely manner, we create a classic boiling-over situation where “people wait until a problem becomes too big to ignore.”

The need to modify our behavior—no matter how you characterize it—has never been bigger. We’re in a world of never-ending political fights and rants by the billions on social media; it’s a non-stop, global food fight. Meanness—provocation and threats emanating from all parts and levels of society—is a real threat to order and safety. But if Clark thinks niceness carries its own hazards, where do we turn?



Paul Oestreicher

While some might call it semantic hair-splitting, the answer could be “kindness.” If being nice is conflict avoidance, kindness is the ability to “channel and manage the tension.” It’s being frank and forthright while being respectful and courteous. In isolation, niceness misses the chance to ensure accountability. Kindness doesn’t have to be tough love, though. Compassion and humanity—not being self-serving and expedient—are part of the delineation between the two constructs.

I usually find mutual exclusivity to be an irrational choice. But let’s consider that it’s nicer to be kind.

Paul Oestreicher, Ph.D., is a recognized expert in strategic communication, public affairs, and issues, crisis and reputation management.

UKRAINE GROUP TABS YORKTOWN SOLUTIONS

Yorktown Solutions has picked up an \$80K per month pact to represent the Civil Movement For a Just Ukraine, a non-profit group set up by activists with close ties to the country's military.

The Movement says its goals are to promote de-oligarchization, good corporate governance and reforms in the judicial and security sectors.

It was founded by Olekssi Sereduiuk, who leads a union representing soldiers and volunteers at the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Vitali Chorny, a member of the All-Ukrainian Union of ATO Veterans.

Victor Shvetsov, director of the Movement, commanded the Airmobile 79th Departments and fought Russian-backed separatists in the eastern Ukraine.

Washington-based Yorktown handles PR, advocacy and perception management duties for the Movement.

It seeks greater engagement of US officials, NGOs, media outlets and business leaders on issues pertaining to Ukraine.

Yorktown's one-year \$960K contract runs through Aug. 17, 2022.

HONEYWELL'S BRECKEN TO H+K STRATEGIES

Steve Brecken, who led global PR for Honeywell's aerospace unit, has joined Hill+Knowlton Strategies as senior VP in its energy & industrials practice.



Steve Brecken

At Honeywell, Brecken led strategy development/execution, media relations, issues and crisis management.

Earlier, he was communications manager at Sierra Nevada Corp., aerospace/national security contractor, and director of ITT Corp.'s night vision and geospatial systems unit.

Richard Millar, H+K global president and Americas CEO, praised Brecken's sector intelligence and diverse range of

expertise, which will help the E&I practice "find new ways to apply creative solutions to some of the industries' most complex challenges."

AGOURA HILLS WANTS PR PARTNER

Agoura Hills, the California city that bills itself as the "Gateway to the Santa Monica Mountains," wants to hire a firm to support its strategic communications, media relations and PR priorities.

Located in Los Angeles County, Agoura Hills' population of 20K-plus is 77 percent White, 10 percent Hispanic and seven percent Asian-America.

Median household income is \$110K and home value is more than \$750K.

The desired PR firm will promote messaging consistent with the city council's and city manager's direction, amplify successes, minimize the impact of controversial issues and assist the city in meeting the communications needs of residents and businesses, according to the RFP.

Proposals are due Aug. 27 at <https://www.planetbids.com/portal/portal.cfm?CompanyID=39478>.

[Read the RFP.](#)

DROGA TO LEAD ACCENTURE INTERACTIVE

Accenture Interactive has named Dave Droga, founder of advertising powerhouse Droga5, CEO & creative chairman, effective Sept. 1.

He succeeds Brian Whipple, who built AI into a \$10.6B digital marketing business during his ten-year run.

Droga will report to Accenture CEO Jim Sweet.

Accenture acquired Droga5 in 2019.

Founded in 2006, Droga5 has worked with Amazon Prime Video, Kraft, Prudential, JPMorgan Chase, Tourism Australia, New York Times Co., Game of Thrones, Hershey and Under Armour.

It currently counts Allstate, Kimberly-Clark, Petco Health and Wellness and Lululemon Athletica as clients.



David Droga

IPG DXTRA DEVELOPS ANTI-RACISM PLATFORM

IPG DXTRA is partnering with anti-racism education non-profit WE ARE, Ad Council, and ADL (Anti-Defamation League) on Dear White Parents, an initiative encouraging White parents to talk with their children about racism early and often. The campaign features [a website](#) with a curated library of age-driven resources and discussion guides, anti-racism workshops and discussions, and a short, unscripted film featuring four families introducing and discussing racism with their children.

The project was conceived by Margenett Moore-Roberts, IPG DXTRA's chief inclusion and diversity officer. A multi-disciplinary team from across several IPG DXTRA agencies collaborated on the platform.

"We're committed to driving awareness and momentum for the people and organizations who have dedicated their careers and lives to fighting racism," said IPG DXTRA Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Andy Polansky.

MEDIA MANEUVERS

Rupert Murdoch unloads **Knewz**, the online news aggregator that shut down in July, to Dylan Howard, the American Media Inc. executive

who was a key player in the National Enquirer's attempts to "catch and kill" stories about former president Donald Trump's extramarital affairs, according to the Daily Beast. News Corp said Knewz had failed to become profitable.

German publisher Axel Springer is in talks to pick up an ownership stake in **Politico**. The *New York Times* reports that Politico is seeking up to \$1B in the potential deal—five times the \$200M in revenue that the platform brings in annually. Springer is already a 50/50 partner with Politico on its European edition. The company's US holdings include Business Insider, which it obtained in 2015, and business-focused digital publisher Morning Brew.

On Aug. 17, **Fox News** CEO Suzanne Scott told employees in a memo obtained by CNN that the company has "asked all employees—whether on site as part of our essential workforce or working remotely—to upload their vaccination status" into an internal database. Requirements for people to report their vaccine status have been frequently challenged by such Fox on-air personalities as Carlson and Sean Hannity.



BEAUFORT SEEKS PR FOR TAX HIKE VOTE

The City of Beaufort, which is located on Port Royal Island, part of South Carolina's Sea Islands, is looking for a firm to mount a public education campaign to support a tax hike referendum that will be on the ballot on Nov. 2.



If passed, the Local Option Sales Tax will add a penny to the seven percent sales tax. Seventy-one percent of the raised revenue will go back to property owners in Beaufort County as a property tax credit. The remaining funds will be distributed to municipalities including Beaufort, Hilton Head Island, Bluffton, Port Royal, Hardeeville and Yemassee.

Beaufort's RFP notes that "a significant amount of the revenue raised through LOST would come from visitors and tourists."

The desired firm will develop a communications strategy, identify influencers, handle messaging, and conduct outreach.

Proposals are due Aug. 31. They go to: City of Beaufort; City Hall; Finance Dept., Attn: John Robinson; 1911 Boundary St.; Beaufort, SC 29902.

The envelope must be marked: "RFP 2022-104 Consulting Services for Public Education Campaign."

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

ICR POWERS EO CHARGING'S GO-PUBLIC DEAL

[ICR Inc.](#) represents EO Charging, the UK-based company that provides charging infrastructure for corporate & governmental electric vehicle fleets, as it merges with First Reserve Sustainable Growth Corp. to become a publicly traded company on the NASDAQ.

EO, which operates in 35 countries, has deployed more than 50,000 chargers for clients such as Amazon, DHL, Tesco, Go-Ahead and Uber.

Founder/CEO Charlie Jardine said the deal with First Reserve will "accelerate our growth timeline, expand our geographic reach and drive innovation" as the company aims to become "the ultimate plug-in charging partner for any business."

ICR works the media and investment community for EO, while [Joel Frank](#), [Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher](#) handles First Reserve.

MANHATTAN DA AIDE JOINS PROSEK PARTNERS

Joan Vollero, who was senior advisor for external affairs at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, has joined [Prosek Partners](#) as VP.

Vollero had been on the staff of Manhattan DA Cyrus R. Vance, Jr. through his three terms in office, previously serving as senior advisor for intergovernmental affairs and public policy as well as director of communications.



Joan Vollero

Before that, she was a spokesperson for the Manhattan borough president and worked as a journalist at NY1 News.

"Joan brings two decades of extensive strategic communication, public affairs and journalism that will benefit our private and public clients," said Andy Merrill, partner at Prosek.

ON THE MOVE

The National Head Start Association names former [APCO Worldwide](#) senior director **Bob Bissen** director of government affairs. Bissen is the founder and president of public affairs shop RJB Strategies. He was previously a senior vice president at Cannae Policy Group. At APCO, he developed and managed government relations and public affairs campaigns to proactively impact federal policy. Launched in 1965 as a comprehensive child development program, Head Start is the voice for more than 1 million children, 245,000 staff and 1,600 Head Start grantees in the United States.

Hill+Knowlton Strategies appoints **Iris Liu** as senior VP to lead H+K China's corporate & performance communications practice. She will also serve as general manager of H+K's office in Beijing. Liu comes to H+K from Shunya International, a leading Chinese PR agency, where she most recently served as VP. She has also been a senior account manager at Porter Novelli China.



Iris Liu

Stanton Communications hires **Eliza Levy** as a senior account manager. Levy was previously a senior communications consultant at Sage Communication. She has also served as federal communications director at the BlueGreen Alliance and manager of public relations and grassroots at the National Council of Textile Organizations. She will focus on technology and American manufacturing.

Science Applications International Corp. names **Catherine Hernandez-Blades** senior VP of marketing and communications. Hernandez-Blades was previously at Aflac, where she served as chief ESG officer and chief communications officer. She has also served as VP communications and public affairs at Raytheon and director, marketing and international communications at Lockheed Martin. In her new role, Hernandez-Blades will be responsible for strategy and execution for all of SAIC's marketing; internal and external communications; public relations; environmental, social and governance; and change management functions.

The Berman Group appoints **Karyn Houde** managing director, Boston. Houde joins the firm from Simon Property Group, where she was director of marketing and business development, leading business-to-business and business-to-consumer marketing. She has also served as marketing director at Westfield Property Group. At The Berman Group, Houde is the lead for the agency's Boston team and will serve high-profile clients. "Karyn brings a deep knowledge of the commercial real estate industry as well as the hospitality and retail sectors," said The Berman Group president Sarah Berman.



Karyn Houde

NP Digital hires **Dan Kalinski** as president of its Australian arm. Prior to joining NP Digital, Kalinski served as CEO of iProspect and Dentsu's integrated performance division in Australia and most recently Canada. He has also served as managing director at Reprise Media, a subsidiary of IPG Mediabrands. In his new post, he is charged with leading regional growth and meeting increasing demand from Australian businesses.

COMMENTARY



Disgraced former president Donald Trump, who legitimized the Taliban by agreeing to negotiate a treaty with those religious fanatics at the expense of the Afghanistan army, wants Joe Biden to “resign in disgrace” over the fall of Kabul.

That is batshit crazy.

The master dealmaker in February 2020 promised the Taliban that the US military would skedaddle from Afghanistan by May 1, 2021, as long as they would refrain from attacking American soldiers.

That let the Taliban train their sights on the poorly supplied and demoralized Afghan Army led by corrupt commanders.

Hundreds of Afghan soldiers died.

Trump’s decision to withdraw from Afghanistan was part of his overall “America First” plan, which included pulling the US from NATO and South Korea.

Biden’s decision to withdraw from Afghanistan is based on cold reality.

If the US couldn’t defeat the Taliban after 20 years at the expense of 2,400 US deaths, 20,000 wounded and \$2T, what’s the sense of sticking around for another year or ten or 20?

There will be plenty of time to analyze how badly Team Biden handled the planning for the withdrawal of US forces. At the very least, America’s Afghan civilian partners should have been airlifted out of the country before US troops.

The ensuing chaos at Kabul dealt a blow to the perception of competence that the Biden administration had enjoyed.

The president, who usually wears his heart on his sleeve, has shown little empathy for the plight of the abandoned Afghans who supported the American mission there.

He has a lot of explaining to do to Americans and our NATO allies who fought with us in Afghanistan.

The James S. and James L. Knight Foundation is offering \$175K to bankroll research projects to figure out how to “mitigate the impacts of disinformation and targeted online manipulation of communities of color.”

The Foundation believes the COVID-19 pandemic, racial justice movement and the 2020 election campaign “provided fodder for bad actors to target persons of color with disinformation that exploits racial tensions and deep-seated socioeconomic anxieties,” according to its RFP.

The Foundation will fund projects that yield “actionable insights” to mitigate the effects of targeted disinformation in CoC populations.

It is accepting proposals until Sept. 15. Decisions will be made in December and grants will go out in early 2022. Let’s hope the results are used in the 2024 presidential campaign.

Mark Zuckerberg just does not get it. Boasting to CBS’ Gayle King that FB has removed more than 18M posts containing misinformation, CEO Zuckerberg went on to say the posts questioning the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine are fair game on the platform.

He said posts questioning whether vaccines are safe belong

to the “vaccine hesitancy” category, not misinformation.

A July study by researchers at Harvard, Northeastern, Rutgers and Northwestern found that people who rely on FB for COVID-19 news have a 10 percent lower vaccination rate than those who do not rely on FB.

Zuckerberg has some explaining to do.

Suffering for the sins of the son. Support for an almost-four-year-old petition on Change.org to re-name the Mario M. Cuomo Bridge to its original Tappan Zee moniker has gained momentum due to the impending resignation of New York governor Andrew Cuomo.

Launched Nov. 1, 2017, more than 240K people have signed the petition, which has targeted 300K signatures.

State senator Mike Martucci has sponsored legislation to remove the Cuomo name from the span.

“Now that the Governor is finally on his way out the door and his horrible legacy has been laid bare for all to see, it is long past time to remove his stained family name from its most visible spot—the Tappan Zee Bridge,” posted Martucci Aug. 19 on Change.org. Note to Martucci: it is the Mario M., not Andrew M., Cuomo Bridge.

How about working to change the name of the Donald J. Trump State Park, which is in Westchester and Putnam?

Trump got to slap his name on the 436-acre park after he donated the land to the state in 2006 after the tough regulatory restrictions killed his plan to build a golf course there.

He got a nice tax write-off in the deal.

Haiti just can’t catch a PR break. Biden’s ill-planned exit from Afghanistan has booted the impoverished Caribbean island, which was walloped by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake on Aug. 14, off the front pages of America’s newspapers.

The still climbing death toll has passed the 2,000 mark and more than 10,000 people were injured.

UNICEF estimated 1.2M people, including 540K children, have been impacted by the quake.

The country never recovered from a 2010 quake that killed 300K people and caused \$8B in damage, which represents 120 percent of Haiti’s gross domestic product, according to the *Financial Times*.

Pope Francis has urged the world to pray for Haiti. Prayers are swell, but more media attention would deliver more tangible aid to the struggling people of Haiti.

Companies have increased climate change disclosure, according to the US Chamber of Commerce.

COC’s Center for Capital Markets Competitiveness surveyed 430 companies and found that 59 percent of them released more info on climate change.

Almost two-thirds (63 percent) say they are communicating with stockholders about the evolving risk of climate change, and 46 percent increased the level of detailed information due to shareholder demands.

The Securities and Exchange Commission issued guidance on climate change disclosure in 2010. It plans to update that guidance in the coming months.

—Kevin McCauley