



Kevin McCauley  
Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's Newsletter



The Inside News of  
PR and Marketing  
Communications

271 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016  
212/679-2471. Fax: 212/683-2750  
[www.odwyerpr.com](http://www.odwyerpr.com); [jobs.odwyerpr.com](http://jobs.odwyerpr.com)

December 17, 2018 Vol. 51 No. 50

## WPP TO CUT JOBS AS PART OF "EVOLUTION"

WPP chief Mark Read is expected to slash 3,500 jobs as part of his three-year "radical evolution" plan to bolster growth at the ad/PR conglomerate by repositioning it as a streamlined creative technology company.

The firm will take a \$375M restructuring charge that is promised to result in \$350M in annual savings by 2021.



Mark Read

The reorg will involve office shutdowns, "right-sizing of under-performing units," establishing a shared services infrastructure and development of "campus co-locations."

No further elimination of brands is anticipated following the dropping/merging of the J. Walter Thompson, Young & Rubicam, Wunderman and VML names.

As a "creative technology company," WPP will be a simpler operation focused on communications (PR, advertising, content, media, PA and healthcare), experience, commerce and technology.

Read, who took over following the April ouster of WPP founder Martin Sorrell, expects 2018 like-for-like revenues will decline by 0.5 percent. He warned that "previously announced account losses will create the anticipated headwind, particularly in the first half of the year."

He views next year as "one of investment in the business with the execution of our cost-savings program and further actions taken to return the company to long-term sustainable growth."

## ALIBABA'S CHRISTIE MOVES TO BRUNSWICK

Bob Christie, VP-international media for Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group, has joined Brunswick Group as a partner in San Francisco.

Based in SF for Alibaba, Christie handled global media beyond China, along with financial/executive communications and crisis management duties. He played a major role in Alibaba's \$25B IPO in 2014, which was the largest public offering at that time.

Christie joined Alibaba following a one-year stint as managing director at Burson-Marsteller.

Earlier he served as communications head and chief spokesperson for the New York Times Co. and Dow Jones & Co, then-owner of the *Wall Street Journal*.

At the NYT and WSJ, Christie helped map their digital transformation and pay models.



Bob Christie

## TOURISM UTAH SEEKS FIRM TO WORK CANADA

The Utah Office of Tourism is looking for a PR firm to pitch the Beehive State to the travel trade press and general media in Canada.

According to its RFP, UOT's objectives are to bring visitors to the state through the promotion of its destinations and experiences, and to increase the amount of visitor spending and length of their visits.

It wants an effort to distinguish the Utah brand from other states and believes a successful campaign will improve the quality of life for Utahns via job creation and tax relief. The Utah legislature has allocated a fiscal 2020 budget of \$155K for the effort, split between \$80K retainer and \$75K for marketing communication. The PR work begins July 1.

The RFP covers five years with budgets to be established each year by Utah lawmakers.

Proposals are due Jan. 18.

They are to be submitted electronically via the Utah [procurement site](http://procurement.site). Cassidee Feinauer has information at [cassideefeinauer@utah.com](mailto:cassideefeinauer@utah.com).



## ADELSON BETS ON NYC CASINO

Billionaire casino magnate Sheldon Adelson is using Democratic-leaning Kivvit public affairs shop in his long-shot effort to build a casino in New York City, according to *Politico*.

The founder/CEO of Las Vegas Sands Corp. is a close ally of president Trump. His \$5M donation to Trump's inauguration is the biggest ever-made for an inaugural. Trump, in turn, awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Adelson's wife, Miriam.

Kivvit co-founder Maggie Moran advised then-New York attorney general Cuomo on his successful campaign for governor in 2010. She directed rapid response for president Clinton in 1996 and was New Jersey campaign manager for VP Al Gore in 2000,

Rich Bamberger, Kivvit managing director, was Gov. Cuomo's communications director in charge of media strategy, coordinated messaging and events. He also worked for Cuomo when he was AG.

New York has only authorized seven non-Indian casinos since 2013. Cuomo was a strong supporter of casinos upstate to spur local economies.



Sheldon Adelson

## **BERLINROSEN HEADS POWER PR 50**

BerlinRosen took top honors in the 2018 Observer's Power PR 50 list released Dec. 14, toppling APCO Worldwide, which tumbled to the No. 4 slot.

Valerie Berlin and Jonathan Rosen's firm surged from the No. 29 slot in 2017.



Peter Finn's Finn Partners also recorded an impressive performance on the Observer list, claiming the No. 3 slot after being shut out from the Top 50 last year.

Compiled by Michael Kaminer, the Observer's list is based on what it considers "influence." rather than revenues, headcount or amount of awards won.

The Lede Co., PMK-BMC, DKC, Ketchum, HL Group, Global Strategy Group and M18 round out this year's Top 10 List.

The Door, (now No. 11), 42West (No. 13), Kekst, Rubenstein (No. 20) and Hiltzik Strategies tumbled from the 2017 Top Ten list.

## **COSTA RICA DOT CALLS NJF AOR**

The Costa Rica Tourism Board, the government department responsible for overseeing Costa Rica's tourism offerings, has named travel and tourism shop NJF its U.S. PR agency of record.

NJF will create and execute a comprehensive PR program to support ICT's Essential Costa Rica campaign, which aims to position Costa Rica as a leading international tourist destination while promoting its sustainability efforts.

The MMGY unit will promote the Central American country through media relations, press trips, consumer activations and partnerships, as well as proving crises management services, if needed. The account will be handled by NJF's team in New York and Miami.

New York-headquartered NJF counts the tourism departments of Rhode Island, South Dakota, Los Cabos and St. Petersburg as clients.

## **LUBY'S TABS SLOANE FOR PROXY DEFENSE**

Luby's casual dining chain is using Sloane & Co. as it fends off a proxy fight by hedge fund Bandera Partners.

Jeff Gramm, partner of Bandera, rapped Luby's business strategy as one that is "simply not working."

He claims since the Houston-based company has refused his request for substantive discussions to shake up Luby's board, he has "no choice" but to run his own slate of directors. Bandera nominees include Gramm's dad, Phil. The elder Gramm was a Texas Senator and UBS investment unit vice chairman.

Luby's, which reported declining sales and profits, owns 142 restaurants including 82 Luby's Cafeterias, 58 Fuddrucker's and a Cheeseburger in Paradise.

Sloane's managing director Dan Zacchei and senior VP Joe Germani rep Luby's. MDC Partners owns Sloane.



## **MEDIA MANEUVERS**

*The Weekly Standard*, a conservative news magazine that is no friend of Donald Trump, is closing down. The Dec. 17 issue of the magazine will be its last, according to parent firm Clarity Media. Clarity CEO Ryan McKibben said the news magazine "has been hampered by many of the same challenges that countless other magazines and newspapers across the country have been wrestling with," seeing large declines in circulation over the past few years. Writers Bill Kristol and Fred Barnes — founded The Weekly Standard in

1995. It was part of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. It was acquired in 2009 by Clarity, which also owns the *Washington Examiner*, *Colorado Springs Gazette* and *Colorado Politics* magazine.

CBS says it will donate \$20 million to a group of organizations working to eliminate workplace sexual harassment. That money, however, will be deducted from any severance benefits due to ousted CBS chief executive officer Les Moonves. Recipients of the money are set to include such groups as the National Women's Law Center, International Women's Media Foundation, Time's Up Legal Defense Fund and Women in Film Los Angeles.

The "dual network" rule, which prevents any of the big four networks (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox) from merging, may be in the crosshairs of FCC chairman Ajit Pai. The rule is just one of several media ownership proposals set to be reconsidered during a broad review, currently under way, that Congress mandates must take place every four years. While the FCC has previously reaffirmed the rule, an FCC Fact Sheet issued on Nov. 21 questions whether it "remains necessary to promote competition, localism, or viewpoint diversity."

Fox News reports that president Trump canceled the White House holiday party for the media. The president and first lady threw the party last year, though they opted to forego the picture-taking opportunities that have become a popular part of the celebration. Fox News also noted that despite the axing of the media holiday party, other holiday-season events are going on as scheduled, with guest lists including "selected media people generally favorable to Trump, including a few Fox News hosts."

Jim Hightower ran afoul of distribution firm Creators Syndicate with his Nov. 27 column "Free the free press from Wall Street plunderers." According to the *Austin Chronicle*, Creators editor Maxine Mulvey told a Hightower staffer that Creators could not run the column and risk retaliation from Gatehouse Media and Digital First Media, both mentioned in the column. Between them, the two companies own around 1,500 newspapers, many of which publish material from Creators. In his piece, Hightower excoriates them as part of "the new breed of fast-buck hucksters who've scooped up hundreds of America's newspapers from the bargain bins of media sell-offs."



## **CONSUMERS ZIP WALLETS TO DISASTER AID**

Consumers are less likely to open their wallets for disaster relief charities this year than they were in 2017, according to a study just released by Ketchum.

The Ketchum Disaster Relief Holiday Giving Study found that just 33 percent of respondents were planning on giving money to a disaster relief cause this holiday season, as opposed to 40 percent last year. That corresponds to a similar drop in overall giving, with 40 percent of this year's respondents saying they give money during the holidays, down from 49 percent in 2017.

Despite a string of major natural disasters this year (including the California wildfires), disaster relief came in surprisingly low on the study's list of causes that respondents were most interested in supporting. Animal welfare was the #1 choice, with 39 percent of respondents saying it was a priority for them. Children's education, hunger, the environment and mental health rounded out the top five, with disaster relief holding the #8 position.

The most popular form of giving was to buy products with proceeds going to a charity (55 percent). Point-of-sale donations (those made in a store) came in second, with 44 percent of respondents citing it as a form of giving they typically use. Social media donations (18 percent), donations made through an employer (16 percent) and texting donations (13 percent) followed on the list.

Consumer interest in brands that drive awareness and funds for causes has a significant lesson to teach companies, according to Monica Marshall, VP and director of Ketchum's Purpose specialty. "Companies committed to issues that align with their mission and their customers' values can differentiate while increasing consumer loyalty," Marshall said.

## **BLICKSILVER REPS BARRACK ON TRUMP TIES**

Crisis and financial PR pro Owen Blicksilver represents billionaire real estate developer Tom Barrack, as federal prosecutors probe whether foreign entities contributed to Donald Trump's inaugural committee and a pro-Trump political action committee. Barrack, a dear friend of the president, headed both committees.

The *New York Times* reported Dec. 14 that investigators are examining whether high-rollers from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and United Arab Emirates used straw donors to funnel money to the committees to buy influence over US policy. American law prohibits foreign donations to federal campaigns, PACs and inaugural committees.

Barrack raised money for both committees but Blicksilver said his client never talked to any foreign person or entity for the purpose of generating money or making donations to the inauguration and PAC.

Grand Rapids-based Lambert acquired Owen Blicksilver PR in April to spearhead its move into the New York financial PR arena.

The firm signed Blicksilver to a multi-year contract to serve as president of the unit that is known for its private equity, M&A, real estate, crisis, bankruptcy, litigation support and B2B marketing savvy.



## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

**SPARK Strategic Ideas** of Charlotte is now working with commercial real-estate firm **Flagship Healthcare Properties**. SPARK will assist the company with brand development as well as developing a strategic planning process to help Flagship position themselves as a leading healthcare commercial real estate firm. The agency will begin working with Flagship by conducting a competitive research study and in-depth interviews with clients and employees. Flagship, which has a significant presence in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic United States, offers such services as property management, leasing and brokerage, investment and capital solutions, consulting and development.

**Motion** is now working with **Gold Eagle**, a producer of chemicals and solutions made to protect, preserve and enhance the performance of consumer and durable goods. The Chicago-based Motion will be providing public relations and digital support for four of Gold Eagle's brands. The agency also represents World of Whirlpool and Truluck's Restaurant Group. Earlier this year, Motion provided public relations and digital support for Exelon Corporation's inaugural HeForShe STEM Innovation Leadership Academies.

**Sage Communications** is now providing strategic marketing and communications services to **The Export-Import Bank of the United States**, a federal government agency. Sage's work for EXIM includes the ideation and execution of the design and layout for a 70+ page Competitiveness Report to Congress compatible with 508 compliance and print production. EXIM is one of seven new Sage clients, spanning federal and enterprise technology and event management verticals.

**Greentarget Global Group** has added **Brown Rudnick, Carbon Black and TransMed Systems** to its client roster. Brown Rudnick is a law firm that specializes in high-stakes litigation and business transactions; Carbon Black provides next-generation endpoint security delivered via the cloud; and TransMed Systems works to improve the process of developing, identifying and matching eligible patients to clinical trials. Greentarget will be providing these clients with PR services that include research projects, thought leadership initiatives and media relations programs.



**Marino** has added **Maher Commercial Realty** to its portfolio of real estate accounts. Marino has been retained by the Beverly Hills-based brokerage to develop and execute a communications strategy to raise its profile and help build and establish the brand among key target audiences. Founded by Oron Maher, who has worked with BRC Advisors and Coldwell Banker Commercial, Maher Commercial Realty specializes in investment sales and leasing transactions across all property types within the Greater Los Angeles Area. Marino president John F. Marino says the addition comes as the company moves to expand its real estate practice on the West Coast.



## **CULTURAL ALIGNMENT KEY FOR GEN Z**

Today's young people tend to be highly individualized and making culturally relevant connections is non-negotiable. If you want to be noticed, followed and garner their attention, find and align with the most relevant groups within youth culture. Successful brand alignment with young people depends, in part, on your organization's capability to make psychographic and situational context a priority.



**Gregg L. Witt**

What does this mean? Many brands default to demographic, geographic and behavioral targeting as their primary filters because they are more convenient, but the reality is that relationships are built in the personal realm. Demographic targeting, such as age, gender and ethnicity, remains a starting point to help organize consumers who are more likely to be a good match with a brand. However, the ultimate goal is audience segmentation that helps us not just organize youth culture, but to understand it.

### **Hyper-individualization is the norm**

Gen Z pushes the idea of individualism, sometimes to the point of hyper-individualism. Gen Z defines itself as more highly individualized than previous generations. This perception is important. Whether or not they truly are the most individual generation of our time is a moot point if they believe they are. It's interesting when you consider how much exposure they have to the world via the Internet and social media, at a time when they're developing a sense of self: they may have more options and raw materials to choose from than previous generations.

To understand Gen Z's perspective we have to recognize their self-perception as the most unique generation. A 2017 report by AwesomenessTV found that, "Growing up in a time when intersectionality is the buzzword du jour, [Gen Z] perceive identity on a spectrum — a complex, ever-evolving construction of self rather than a static set of demographic descriptors." In fact, there seems to be an infinite number of hybrid subcultures that young people can zero in on and claim as "home." Being highly individualized isn't a barrier to entry or to societal acceptance. One might easily be accepted because of their individuality, instead of being excluded for it.

Today's youth celebrate differences with less judgment or hesitation than previous generations, but it goes beyond just self-expression. Gen Z needs a more flexible identity because they have to adapt to more variety and situations in their lives.

We've all been in situations where we bring forward a different side of our personality to blend in with others. This is adaptation. Gen Z will try to match themselves to their current situation just like everyone else. Yet, because they're also at a life stage marked by transition, coming up with the right personality may be more intense, because they're discovering and defining themselves, as opposed to toggling between more solidified personalities like adults might do.

If brands want to connect, they need to understand and adapt to the way that Gen Z defines and identifies

themselves. But tuning into the trends and influences that inform Gen Z's lifestyle and consumer choices means getting out of boardroom comfort zones and into the complexity of youth experience. So, where do we start?

### **Putting alignment into action**

A brand's likelihood of building a commercially viable audience is in direct relation to that brand's ability to identify and connect with the right spectrum of groups within youth culture. The key word here is spectrum. Relying on demographic targeting alone is like casting a net into the water and crossing your fingers. A segmentation method rooted in the lifestyles of youth culture may require more patience and work up front, but it's far more likely to result in real cultural identification and alignment with the groups that will desire and value what that brand represents.

### **Key stages of youth culture alignment**

**Stage 1: Needs Analysis:** Determine the extent of your targeting needs. How big, small, specific, etc. does your audience have to be for a particular offering?

**Stage 2: Brand and youth personality match:** Identify the consumer traits and characteristics that would be compatible with your brand's offerings. What qualities do you and your ideal audience share?

**Stage 3: Identify and prioritize potential subgroups:** Develop a list of subgroups that share key personality traits and characteristics with your brand, and determine their alignment with commercial viability for your brand.

**Stage 4: Optimal youth audience definition:** How do alignment and commercial viability intersect? Who's most aligned, who is most viable, and how can you strike the most successful balance? Do you need to sacrifice a little alignment to reach a more profitable group, or will sticking to a smaller group of more aligned youth result in more long-term success?

### **Youth culture alignment tips, takeaways**

**Hyper-individualization is the norm:** Gen Z expects unique. When developing creative strategies to reach Gen Z, remember that being highly individualized or even "weird" presents an opportunity to connect with them on their frequency.

**Traditional demographic targeting models are outmoded.** If you really want to get tuned in with this group of individualistic young consumers, focus segmentation strategies on psychographic, lifestyle and situational context as priorities.

**Embrace the diversity of Gen Z.** If you approach Gen Z as a homogeneous entity and fail to appeal to the multitude of segments that comprise it, you'll be relegated to a limited view of both their world and the motivations behind their decision making.

**Identify like-minded subgroups within youth culture that align with your brand, and build relationships with them.** Develop content and experiences that connect to the passions and situations of youth consumers. This human connection helps us to develop true alignment, which fuels the most effective strategies.

*Gregg L. Witt is a youth marketing strategist and chief strategy officer of Engage Youth Co. He's co-author of the book, "The Gen Z Frequency: How Brands Tune In and Build Credibility."*

## **OBAMAS TOPS IN “BRAND INTIMACY”**

Barack and Michelle Obama are tops in a new study that ranks the brand power of famous people from brand-building firm MBLM

The BFF (Brand-Intimate Famous Figures) study measures such attributes as how strong of an emotional connection consumers feel toward a particular celebrity, how likely they are to buy products or donate to causes associated with that celebrity and how central that celebrity is to their day-to-day life. The combination of these factors results in what MBLM calls a public figure’s “Brand Intimacy Quotient.”



Though the Obamas top the overall listings, there are significant differences in which celebrities are preferred by various demographic groups. While Barack Obama is No. 1 in the 18-34 and 35-54 age groups, he drops to No. 4 among respondents age 65 and up. Taking his place in the No. 1 spot for that group is president Trump, who doesn’t make it into the top five in the two younger demographics. Trump also leads among male survey respondents, while Michelle Obama takes the top position with female respondents.

The only other political figure to crack the BFF Top 25 was Elizabeth Warren, who came in at No. 18. Bill Gates came in at No. 7, Pope Francis at No. 9 and The Dalai Lama at No. 13.

When it comes to how much a celebrity influences the spending and donating decisions his or her admirers make, president Trump emerges as the clear winner, with 32 percent saying that they watch or buy products or services, or donate to causes associated with him. Only 18 percent of respondents who admire Barack Obama said the same, and that number is 17 percent for those with a positive impression of Michelle Obama.

## **SEN. MCCONNELL AIDE MOVE TO DEFINERS PA**

Antonia Ferrier, a top aide to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, has shifted to Definers Public Affairs as partner.

The 14-year Capitol Hill veteran told *Politico* she shifted to Definers because she wanted to get out of her comfort zone.

She praised McConnell for passing tax reform, approving judges and pushing for regulatory reforms.

Ferrier also was staff director at the Senate Republican Communications Center and worked for Sens. Roy Blunt (MO), Olympia Snowe (ME) and Bill Frist (TN).

Matt Rhoades, campaign manager for Romney-Ryan 2012, and Joe Pounder, research director for the Republican National Committee, launched Definers in 2015.

The shop made national headlines last month following a *New York Times* report about its opposition research for Facebook, which is now a former client.



**Antonia Ferrier**

## **GLADSTONE, ABMAC BOOK TRAVELPORT**

Gladstone Place Partners and Abernathy MacGregor handle the \$4.4B cash acquisition of Travelport Worldwide by Siris Capital Group and Evergreen Coast Capital, the Menlo Park technology affiliate of Elliott Management Corp.



Doug Steenland, Travelport chairman, considers the \$15.75 per-share offer a “good outcome” for shareholders. Travelport, which had \$2.4B in 2017 revenues, is a leader in airline merchandising, hotel content/distribution, car rental, and B2B payment solutions. It also provides IT services to airlines for shopping, ticketing and departure control.

Travelport earned \$72M on \$2B revenues for the nine-month period. It projects 2018 revenues in the \$2.5B range. The deal, which is expected to close during the second-quarter of 2019, includes a “go-shop” provision that runs through Jan. 24. Gladstone senior VP Michael Flaherty is working the deal with AbMac senior VP Blair Hennessy and managing director Dana Gorman.

## **REP. COOPER AIDE WALKS TO CALVERT ST.**

Haley Davidson, who worked for Tennessee Congressman Jim Cooper for a dozen years, is now at Calvert Street Group in Nashville.

As chief operating officer, Davidson will chart growth plans for the grassroots PR firm that is involved in public policy and land use initiatives for corporate clients such as Comcast and Walmart.

Davidson was communications director and campaign manager for Cooper, a Democrat and member of the Blue Dog Coalition of conservative and moderate politicians. She handled issues regarding healthcare, federal budget, emergency response and voter access.



**Haley Davidson**

The Congressman called Davidson a “terrific communicator” and one of his closest advisors.

## **E-CIG MAKER CONTINUES LOBBYING BLITZ**

Electronic cigarette manufacturer NJOY has continued its lobbying salvo in response to federal regulators’ crackdown on flavored e-cigarette and vaping products.

The Scottsdale, AZ-headquartered company has retained Bob Livingston’s (R-LA) lobbying firm The Livingston Group concerning “regulation and legislation related to NJOY products and business interests,” according to lobbying registration documents filed with Congress in December.

NJOY’s most recent lobbying retainer comes on the heels of the vaping company’s Dec. pact with lobbying firm Card & Associates to educate elected officials on the company’s product safety and business practices.

The company survived a 2017 Chapter 11 filing after raising \$35 million in investment capital. The e-cig giant has since launched a refreshed brand identity.

Livingston will head the NJOY account along with support from his former chief of staff, J. Allen Martin.

## COMMENTARY

**Donald Trump's "fake news" taunt is gaining traction overseas**, especially in countries that are headed up by despots and authoritarian leaders.

The Committee to Protect Journalists reports that 251 journalists from around the globe were in jail because of their work as of Dec. 1.



The bulk (70 percent) of the imprisoned journalists face anti-state charges such as belonging to or abetting terrorist groups.

Turkey, China and Egypt are the world's top media gulags, accounting for more than half of those in prison, according to the report released Dec. 12.

CPJ found that the number of media people jailed on charges of "false news" rose sharply from nine two years ago to 28 this year. Let's give it up for Donald Trump!

The organization said: "The increase comes amid heightened global rhetoric about 'fake news,' of which US president Donald Trump is the leading voice."

CPJ took note of a fresh wave of repression in Saudi Arabia that led to a crackdown on press freedom. Sixteen journalists, including four females who wrote about women's rights in the Kingdom, including the lifting of the ban on driving, were behind bars on Dec. 1.

Saudi Arabia has faced US Congressional criticism in the aftermath of the torture, murder and dismemberment of dissident and Washington Post contributor Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul on Oct. 2.

Anti-press Trump though, gave the Saudis a free ride over the Khashoggi atrocity. Rather than condemn Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whom US intelligence agencies said ordered the Khashoggi murder, Trump shamefully passed.

"Maybe he did, maybe he didn't," wimped out Trump on Nov. 27. He put the false promise of billions of dollars in defense contracts from the Saudis ahead of this country's moral standing in the world.

The tweeter-in-chief's unwillingness to criticize Crown Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia's defacto ruler, sends a powerful signal to oppressors and tyrants throughout the world: the media are fair game.

Trump on Dec. 13 cancelled the annual White House Christmas party for the media.

It's just as well.

Attending a party hosted by a guy who routinely denigrates the press as the "enemy of the people," would have been the height of hypocrisy.

Let's wish journalists throughout the world a happy and safe New Year.

**Did you ever think that you would see the day on which the United States**, the former proud leader of the free world, was ridiculed, mocked and laughed at during an open session of an international conference?

That national embarrassment occurred Dec. 10 when the American delegate to the global climate conference in Poland pitched "beautiful clean coal" as part of the solution to combatting global warming. Hysterics ensued.

The US did win the support of a trio of allies, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait backed the beleaguered US delegate Wells Griffith, advisor to president Trump. But as the old saying goes, with friends like Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait....

Griffith's laughable position on global warming comes as scientists warn that the Arctic Ocean has lost 95 percent of its thickest ice, the glue that holds the Arctic together. Those scientists are from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a group that is hardly in the back pocket of China, the nation that president Trump fingers as the mastermind of a global warming hoax.

Meanwhile as the US is mocked on the world's stage, 44 former Democratic and Republican senators warn that the country is "entering a dangerous time" that may lead to a constitutional crisis as investigators close in on the tweeter-in-chief. The *Washington Post* on Dec. 11 published their open letter to Senate colleagues in which the former lawmakers said the convergence of the special counsel Robert Mueller and Congressional investigations come at a time when simmering regional conflicts and global power confrontations continue to threaten our security, economy and geopolitical stability.

"We are at an inflection point in which the foundational principles of our democracy and our national security interests are at stake, and the rule of law and the ability of our institutions to function freely and independently must be upheld," they wrote.

The authors state that at critical times in America's history, when constitutional crisis threatened the country's foundations, the Senate rose in defense of our democracy.

The time to take a stand is here again. "Regardless of party affiliation, ideological leanings or geography, as former members of this great body, we urge current and future senators to be steadfast and zealous guardians of our democracy by ensuring that partisanship or self-interest not replace national interest," concluded the Senators.

The ex-Senators make it very clear that if the Senate wants to Make America Great Again, it must begin to function as an equal branch of the government and hold the president responsible for his actions.

—Kevin McCauley