



**Kevin McCauley**  
Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's

The Inside News of **Public Relations & Marketing Communications** [odwyerpr.com](http://odwyerpr.com)

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)

February 13, 2023 Vol. 56 No. 7



Show your firm's expertise in such specialities as healthcare, tech and finances (as well as 17 others) by taking in part in O'Dwyer's 2023 Rankings of PR Firms. **The deadline to submit is Fri., Mar. 13.** [View Rankings Instructions \(PDF\)](#).

## **KEKST CNC GOES TO WORK FOR ADANI GROUP**

Kekst CNC is providing global strategic communications and crisis support to Adani Group, the India-based conglomerate that has been accused of accounting fraud and stock market manipulation by Hindenburg Research.

The company has denied Hindenburg's allegations and has issued a more than 400-page rebuttal to the charges lodged by the New York-based short seller.

Adani Group, which operates India's ports, runs its power transmission lines, stores its grain and produces its cement, ranks among the country's top ten non-financial firms.

Gautam Adani, who was the world's third richest man and the self-proclaimed Rockefeller of India, has lost tens of billions in wealth since the release of Hindenburg's report on Jan. 24.

*The Economist* editorialized on Feb. 9 that "the humbling of Gautam Adani is a test for Indian capitalism." It also is a political embarrassment for India's prime minister Narendra Modi, who has close ties to Adani.

Adani Group reportedly has hired New York law firm Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz to help stem the crisis.

Wachtell is "among the most sought-after advisers by besieged corporate boards at some of the largest US companies trying to fend off activist investors or hostile takeovers," according to the *Financial Times*.

Publicis Groupe owns Kekst.

## **PENDULUM PICKS BERRY FOR CCO**

Pendulum Therapeutics, a biotech company that promotes metabolic health through its microbiome-targeted products, brings on actress and director Halle Berry as chief communications officer, as well as equity owner and investor.



**Halle Berry**

In addition to being "brand evangelist," Berry will collaborate with Pendulum's executive team on future product development and innovation. "She is aligned with our mission to empower people to transform their gut and metabolic health with clinically-proven products," said Pendulum co-founder and CEO Colleen Cutcliffe.

## **INTERPUBLIC SHOWS 1.8% Q4 REVENUE JUMP**

Interpublic reported Q4 revenues inched ahead 1.8 percent to \$3B while net income tumbled 17 percent to \$297.2M.

Revenues for the full year were up 6.7 percent to \$10.9B and net income was off 1.6 percent to \$938M.

Though the macroeconomic situation remains uncertain, CEO Philippe Krakowsky says marketers "see the need to stay invested and be in the marketplace, as well as a degree of caution."

The specialized communications and experiential solutions group, which includes Weber Shandwick, Golin, Current Global, R&CPMK, DeVries Global, Jack Morton, Momentum, and DXTRA Health, reported flat revenues of \$356.3M. It was up 3.5 percent on an organic basis.

For 2022, SP&ESG posted a 5.8 percent revenue boost to \$1.4B and 8.5 percent growth organically.



**Philippe Krakowsky**

## **BEDINGFIELD TO EXIT WHITE HOUSE CD POST**

Kate Bedingfield, White House communications director, will exit her post at the end of the month.

Ben LaBolt, partner at Bully Pulpit Interactive and longtime Biden advisor, will succeed Bedingfield.

Bedingfield, who has led communications for Biden for the past four years and was his spokesman during his vice presidency, had planned to leave the White House last summer but stayed through 2022.

Prior to advising Biden, Bedingfield was VP-communications at both the Motion Picture Assn. of America and Monumental Sports and Entertainment. She also handled comms for Sen. Jeanne Shaheen's New Hampshire campaign.

LaBolt headed communications for the Supreme Court nomination of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. The White House notes that LaBolt is making history as its first openly gay communications director.



**Kate Bedingfield**

## **RI SEEKS OPIOID ABUSE OUTREACH**

The Rhode Island Department of Health wants proposals for outreach and community engagement targeted at BIPOC communities that are at risk of opioid overdose.



There's been a rise in overdose death rates for Blacks and Hispanic Rhode Islanders over the last few years, according to the RIDOH.

The Department wants to partner with a non-profit to educate BIPOC groups about opioid prevention and treatment services that are available.

The outreach will include connection to undocumented, immigrant and refugee populations.

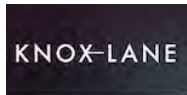
RIDOH may grant up to four two-year contracts with work beginning April 1. The pacts may be renewed for three additional one-year periods subject to vendor performance and the availability of funds.

Interested parties must register at the [Ocean State Procures](#) electronic portal and submit their bids by Feb. 23.

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

## **KNOX LANE INVESTS IN SPECTRUM SCIENCE**

Knox Lane has made a strategic investment in Spectrum Science, which ranks [No. 4 on O'Dwyer's roster of healthcare firms](#) with fee income of \$48.9M in 2021.



Focused on the pharma, biotech and life science categories, Spectrum has handled clients such as AbbVie, Moderna and Horizon Therapies.

Shamik Patel, Knox Lane partner, and Brent Gunderson, principal, said Spectrum delivers solutions across commercialization, including strategic communications, advertising, clinical trial recruitment, scientific strategy and medical communications.

Jonathan Wilson, Spectrum owner/CEO, said the firm has "built a team, structure and culture that puts people at the center from the clients we serve, to the patients they help, to the colleagues we collaborate with around the world."

[Spectrum](#) has more than 300 staffers in the US and UK.

## **BRUNSWICK TO TAKE ROTHSCHILD PRIVATE**

Brunswick Group handles Concordia, the Rothschild family holding company, that plans to take the storied Rothschild & Co. investment bank private.

The Paris-based financial institution, which traces its roots to the 1700s, has 60 offices in 40 countries.



Concordia holds 38.9 percent of Rothschild's share capital and 47.5 percent of the voting rights.

It plans to offer shareholders \$52 per share for their stock, which represents a 19 percent premium over the Feb. 3 closing price of Rothschild's shares.

Concordia says the bank's businesses (wealth & asset management, merchant banking and global advisory) do not require access to capital from the public equity markets.

It also believes a privately held Rothschild will be able to focus on long-term growth rather than meeting short-term earnings.

Brunswick Group's Simone Selzer represents Concordia.

## **ON THE MOVE**

**Antenna Group** hires Jacob Loban as EVP and head of digital and performance marketing. Loban joins the agency from [Edelman](#), where he was EVP, head of performance intelligence, North America and launched the firm's performance intelligence group, a division of Edelman Data & Intelligence. Prior to Edelman, he was head of US performance media at Omnicom Group's PHD. At Antenna, Loban will lead the digital and performance marketing group and work to identify new digital channels and build innovative service offerings.

**The TASC Group** promotes Rida Bint Fozi to president and part-owner. Bint Fozi has been with the firm since 2012, most recently serving as managing director. She has spearheaded national and international media campaigns, local grassroots efforts and creative advertising, gala events, film screenings and arts festivals and managed crisis communications campaigns.

In her new role, Bint Fozi will continue to oversee high-level account management and company-wide DEI initiatives, while assuming new responsibilities in the areas of client acquisition and part owner status in The TASC Group overall.

**The Ehrhardt Group** names **Sabrina Ventris** VP of finance. Ventris was previously financial manager at the firm. She was also the financial analyst for Univision and The Onion. In her new role, Ventris will oversee the financial, billing and accounting operations for the firm.

**Lamps Plus**, a specialty lighting retailer, appoints **David Luebke** as its first CMO. Luebke comes to the company from Build.com, where he served as vp of marketing. He was previously director of digital marketing as Walmart and digital marketing manager at ConAgra Brands. In his new post, Luebke will work to reach new customers, while also providing deeper, more personalized connections with existing customers across web and retail channels.

**Mercury** hires **Caroline Korba** as a VP in its Fort Lauderdale office. Korba most recently served as communications director for Jen Jordan's campaign for Georgia attorney general. She was previously press secretary and deputy communications director for Nikki Fried's bid to become Florida's governor. In addition to political campaign work, her background includes in the corporate and non-profit sectors. At Mercury, Korba specializes in strategic communications and media relations.

**Trefethen Family Vineyards** promotes Tiffany Kenny to VP of marketing and consumer sales. Kenny joined Trefethen in 2021 as director of consumer sales and hospitality and has been responsible for its direct-to-consumer sales channels. She has held senior sales and marketing posts at Ensemble Marketing Group, Signorello Estate and Acumen Wines. In her new role, she oversees consumer and trade marketing, and public relations.



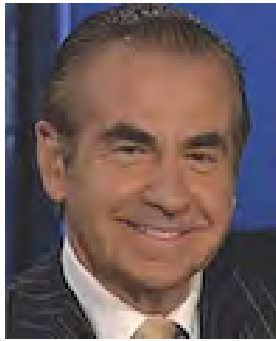
**Rida Bint Fozi**



**Caroline Korba**

## **RESCUING A FLOUNDERING PRESS SECRETARY**

The bedrock practice of public relations is dealing effectively with the media. Building positive relationships with the press is what public relations pioneers like Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays practiced a century ago. And media relations remains the go-to skill of successful public relations practitioners today.



**Fraser Seitel**

And media relations remains the go-to skill of successful public relations practitioners today.

The most powerful—and difficult—media relations job in the world is the press secretary to the President of the United States. Every day, the White House press secretary must go out and confront a menacing White House press corps, eager to unleash red-meat controversy throughout the land. A press secretary's every word, there-

fore, must be measured and purposeful. The job is neither for the squeamish nor the inexperienced.

Over time, a small number of press secretaries—Robert Gibbs under President Obama, Tony Snow and Ari Fleischer under President Bush, Mike McCurry under President Clinton, Sarah Sanders under President Trump and even Jen Psaki under President Biden—were outstanding. A smaller number—Scott McClellan under Bush, Jay Carney under Obama and Sean Spicer under Trump—were dreadful.

Biden's current press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre is, by all accounts, a lovely woman. But so far at least, she's a miserable press secretary. Admittedly, that's harsh but also true.

What Ms. Jean-Pierre lacks—and her more able predecessors possessed—were characteristics that made them invaluable to their boss and the media through which they conveyed their Administration's positions, philosophies and programs.

Indeed, a media relations counselor at any level and in any organization must abide by at least three inviolate principles:

### **It's not about you**

First, you're speaking as a proxy on behalf of your chief and the administration. Your primary job is accurately to reflect the positions of the enterprise. Who you are and what you think are of little consequence.

The universally-respected McCurry recognized this when he was asked, point blank, at a Clinton briefing whether he, personally, believed the President had a sexual relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. McCurry's answer: "The President has said he never had any improper relationship with this woman . . . I'm here to represent the thinking, the actions, the decisions of the President."

In Jean-Pierre's case, her unique background has complicated keeping the story on Biden and not herself. She devoted a large part of her very first White House press briefing in May to noting, "I am a Black, gay, immigrant woman, the first of all three of those to hold this position."

Her pride was justifiable and worth mentioning. But she didn't let it go there. Over the subsequent 10 months, she's continued to write, lecture and bring attention to her own personal story. Hers is an inspirational tale, but her job is to focus attention on the President's successes, not her own.

### **Gain a seat at the table**

One way to keep the focus on the chief is by earning a seat at the policy table to participate in the discussions and understand the decisions that become administration policy.

"Access is power" goes the public relations truism, and

that's certainly the case if one is the organization's lead spokesperson. The closer you are to the individual running the show, the more confidence you'll display and speak with when representing that individual in public.

Jean-Pierre is a relative newcomer not only to the Biden administration, but also to the practice of public relations. Her background is as a political operative, having served in various organizational roles in Democrat campaigns. Her public relations "experience" began two years ago as Psaki's deputy. If Jean-Pierre does have a voice and seat at the Biden management table, it's likely a faint one at the distant far end.

This unfamiliarity with the boss wouldn't pose as much of a problem if Jean-Pierre demonstrated an ability to...

### **Know the policy cold**

A capable media relations professional must also know everything about everything of relevance that's going on both within and outside the organization. He or she must be the eyes and ears of a preoccupied chief.

For the White House press secretary, it's this responsibility—to be equipped and ready with correct answers—that transcends all others. And it's here that Jean-Pierre's policy uncertainty and fear of failure expose themselves.

Watch today's Daily White House Press Briefing and the object that stands out is the voluminous briefing book, to which Jean-Pierre's hands appear to be perpetually connected. She rarely answers a question without first turning to the section in the briefing book coded to the subject in question.

Nothing improper, of course, about making sure your answers reflect written policy. Psaki would occasionally, infrequently turn to the briefing book to ensure accuracy in a particularly prickly area of inquiry. But she, like all good press secretaries, handled most questions with an extemporaneous confidence and clarity. Jean-Pierre, by contrast, is so wedded to the briefing book for virtually every answer, her reliance on it has become a source of criticism and even ridicule by administration critics, who question not only the press secretary's confidence but her competence.

For example, when Psaki faced recurring hostile questions about the disastrous policy of moving migrants from the southern border, she'd respond specifically, aggressively and extemporaneously, as she did at a January 2022 briefing:

"What I can tell you, in terms of what our policy is and how we're approaching the border, is that we continue to be under Title 42. Migrants who cannot be expelled under Title 42 are placed into immigration proceedings."

A year later, when confronted with similar hostility about the Biden administration's southern border inaction, Jean-Pierre's answers were characteristically vague, defensive and studiously scripted.

In fairness, the job of White House press secretary is a 24/7 pressure cooker, where self-important reporters mainly fling gotcha questions to win themselves air time. Karine Jean-Pierre has been in the saddle for only less than a year. With time may come increased confidence and greater mastery of the subject matter.

But Ms. Jean-Pierre is off to a rocky start. If she's to reverse disastrous first impressions, she'll need to master these three media relations principles ASAP.

*Fraser P. Seitel has been a communications consultant, author and teacher for 40 years. He is author of the Pearson text "The Practice of Public Relations," now in its 14th edition, and co-author of "Rethinking Reputation" and "Idea Wise." He may be reached directly at [yusake@aol.com](mailto:yusake@aol.com).*

## **OMNICOM POSTS FLAT Q4 REVENUES**

Omnicom reported flat Q4 revenues of \$3.9B, though CEO John Wren highlights a 7.2 percent rise in organic growth, which he says “was stronger than expected.”



**John Wren**

The upbeat organic results were “led by resilient performance across global geographies.”

Wren said Omnicom entered 2023 “in a very strong position” but the company is “closely tracking the macroeconomic outlook and is fully prepared to respond appropriately.”

Omnicom’s PR group (Ketchum, FleishmanHillard, Porter Novelli, Mercury, Marina Maher Communications) posted an 8.8 rise in revenues to \$401.5M during the quarter. It was up 12.7 percent on an organic basis.

For the full-year, PR was up 11.1 percent to \$1.5B on a reported basis and 13.7 percent organically.

## **AZ COUNTY ISSUES VACCINE EQUITY RFP**

Cochise County, Arizona, seeks to obtain a marketing firm that can develop a campaign focused on COVID-19 vaccine equity.



The southeastern AZ county, named after the Native American chief Cochise, counts a population of about 125,000. It’s most populous city is Sierra Vista and the county seat is Bisbee.

The county is looking for an agency that can develop a campaign that raises community awareness of COVID-19 vaccination opportunities as well as some of the services currently being provided by Cochise County Health and Social Services.

Scope of the work includes: developing a marketing campaign to increase the community’s awareness of COVID-19 vaccinations as well as CCHSS services; creating culturally and linguistically appropriate marketing materials and services; conducting an analysis to identify and remove communications barriers in the community; providing marketing recommendations; and submitting quarterly reports.

Proposals are due by 5:00 p.m. (MST) on Feb. 17.

All proposals must be received via the [Cochise County Bonfire portal](#).

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

## **ABA’S LUGAR CHECKS IN AT HILTON**

Katherine Lugar, who is CEO of the American Beverage Assn., will check in at Hilton as executive VP of corporate affairs in April.



**Katherine Lugar**

She will handle PR, government affairs and ESG matters and report to Hilton CEO Christopher Nassetta.

Prior to the ABA, Lugar worked at the Retail Industry Leaders Assn. as EVP, handled government relations at Travelers Insurance and was VP of legislative and political affairs at the National Retail Federation.

Nassetta said Lugar will play a pivotal role in shaping Hilton’s narrative as it “moves ahead in the next golden age of travel.”

## **CELEB PR PRO HOWARD BRAGMAN DIES AT 66**

Howard Bragman, a top Los Angeles celebrity rep and crisis counselor, died on Feb. 11 from acute monocytic leukemia. He was 66.



**Howard Bragman**

A long time LGBTQ+ activist, Bragman handled the “coming out” of basketball’s Sheryl Swoopes, actress Meredith Baxter and NFL’s Michael Sam, according to a report in Deadline.

“Howard Bragman was an industry leader who masterfully used the power of the press to create positive change and visibility for LGBTQ people,” said a statement from GLAAD’s president/CEO Sarah Kate Ellis. “Throughout his long career, he worked with many LGBTQ notables to ensure their coming out stories were treated with dignity and created impact for the entire community.”

Bragman co-founded Bragman Nyman Cafarelli in 1989. It was acquired by Interpublic in 2001.

He went on to set up Fifteen Minutes and La Brea Media.

Bragman, who also represented Stevie Wonder, Monica Lewinsky and Sharon Osbourne, is the author of “Where’s My Fifteen Minutes?: Get Your Company, Your Cause, or Yourself the Recognition You Deserve.”

## **TENEO’S COCHRAN RETURNS TO USDA**

Cathy Cochran, senior VP in Teneo’s Washington office, has rejoined the US Dept of Agriculture as director in its communications office.

She joined the global CEO advisory from Glover Park Group (now [FGS Global](#)), where she led its food and agriculture practice.

Prior to GPG, Cochran did a nearly 10-year stint at the USDA and served as press secretary for Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack during the Obama administration.

She also led communications for USDA’s food safety and inspection service.



**Cathy Cochran**

## **PROSEK PARTNERS HIRES PAI’S ROUSSELLIER**

Matthieu Roussellier is coming on board at Prosek Partners as a managing director in the firm’s London office.

Roussellier joins Prosek from European private equity firm PAI Partners, where he served as head of communications.

He previously held senior in-house and advisory communications roles at global investment firm Permira, law firm Latham & Watkins and Greenbrook Communications.

“Matthieu’s deep private markets background, combined with his experience in both the London and European markets, makes him an excellent addition to Prosek,” said managing partner Jen Prosek.

Roussellier’s hire follows the addition of former Finsbury managing director Phil Walters and former Finsbury account director Andrew Pantaleo to Prosek’s private markets and special situations practice last year.



**Matthieu Roussellier**

## PIACENTE GROUP WORKS BIG CHINESE IPO

The Piacente Group handled the \$2.4B IPO of Shanghai-based Hesai Technology, which is the largest public offering in the US of a Chinese company since 2021.



Hesai makes laser-based sensors for automakers and autonomous driving companies.

Bob McCooey, Asia-Pacific chair at NASDAQ, told the *Financial Times* that he hopes Hesai's IPO Feb. 8 "cleared the dark clouds that hung over the US capital markets for Chinese companies."

Piacente Group's Brandi Piacente and Jenny Cai represent Hesai.

Piacente launched her IR and financial communications firm in 2005 to work exclusively with Asia-based companies that are listed in Hong Kong, New York and in southeast Asia.

Prior to setting up her own shop, Piacente was a managing director at Anne McBride Co, senior account executive at The Financial Relations Board and IR manager at Evolve Software, which was acquired by Oracle.

She's fluent in Mandarin and is a Kung-fu champion (Taiwan 1992).

## 'GATEWAY TO VANCOUVER ISLAND' WANTS PR

Nanaimo Airport, the "Gateway to Vancouver Island," wants to book a firm to create a marketing campaign to increase brand awareness and recognition of its service offerings.



Vancouver Island has a population around 850K and is home to British Columbia's capital city of Victoria.

Air Canada, WestJet and Canadian North currently serve Nanaimo Airport, which has scheduled flights to Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton, plus Toronto seasonally.

The airport's marketing goals focus on boosting passenger education, strategic partnerships, mascot development and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Responses are due Feb. 21. They go to [purchasing@ycd.ca](mailto:purchasing@ycd.ca) with a subject line: "RFSOQ 20230125; Marketing Services, Attention: Keith Granbois."

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

## EX-REP. KATKO JOINS HILLEAST GROUP

Former New York Republican Congressman John Katko has signed on as a senior advisor at HillEast Group, the DC-based government affairs shop.

One of the ten Republicans who voted to impeach Donald Trump, Katko retired from Congress in 2022.

Elected in 2015, Katko served as ranking member on the House Homeland Security Committee and led efforts to secure the US border and pushed for cybersecurity measures.



John Katko

He also was a member of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and chair of the Republican Governance Group. Prior to Congress, Katko spent 20 years as a federal organized crime prosecutor.

Brad Gentile, who founded HillEast in 2017, had served as Katko's chief of staff.

## ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

**Trust Relations** is engaged to refine and amplify the brand story and market position of **Valant**, an electronic health records software provider for behavioral health practices. In addition to promoting Valant's EHR and practice management software, Trust Relations will work to generate thought leadership opportunities for the company's executives. "We needed a PR partner to better inform the market that a behavioral-focused EHR does exist that can help practices of all sizes and understands their patients, their practices, and providers," said Valant CEO Ram Krishan. "We're grateful to have the Trust Relations team develop a campaign surrounding this message and build a solid brand strategy going forward."



**The Consultancy PR** signs on as agency of record for **Studio Indigo**, a London-based multidisciplinary architecture, interior design and estate management firm. The agency is leading PR strategy to help expand the firm's awareness and presence in the US with emphasis on media relations. Established in 2005 by architect and creative director Mike Fisher, Studio Indigo has worked on projects across a diverse range of sectors including residential, commercial developments, yachts and aviation.

**Vitamin**, integrated marketing shop, picks up Venture Trailers, which manufactures trailers for powerboats and personal watercraft. The agency will lead a multi-channel marketing campaign as well as the creation of a modernized corporate brand. It will re-imagine the design and user experience for Venture's new e-commerce website, as well as launching, managing, and hosting the company's e-commerce environment and handling its email marketing. "Given their experience in guiding the evolution of manufacturing brands into digital modernization, it was clear Vitamin brings key vision and skillset to the table," said Venture Trailers CEO Stephanie Van Slyke.

**Lou Hammond Group** signs up Explore Newnan-Coweta, GA; Space Center Houston Moon 2 Mars Festival and SIKES Group. LHG will provide public relations/corporate communications, strategic planning, branding and digital marketing for the new clients. Coweta County and the City of Newman are located just south of Atlanta; Space Center Houston Moon 2 Mars Festival celebrates NASA's Artemis program and the innovations that will help establish a sustainable human presence on the Moon; and SIKES Group is a Houston-based architecture firm that focuses on healthcare, corporate and industrial sectors. The agency has also re-upped with Sonoma County Winegrowers, a former client of 13 years.



**Firecracker PR** picks up retailer-focused computer vision and AI technology company **SeeChange**. Firecracker has been engaged to provide strategic media relations, campaign ideation and brand awareness, targeted toward increasing awareness of the company's smart checkouts and safety solutions.

**Colangelo & Partners** takes on AOR duties for **Ramón Bilbao**, a wine producer in Spain's Rioja region. The agency will develop and execute a strategic communications plan to support Zamora Company, Ramón Bilbao's US importer, and build awareness for the brand through a strategic media relations campaign. Founded in 1924, Ramón Bilbao boasts 445 acres of vineyards throughout the region.

# COMMENTARY

**Why doesn't Joe Biden get credit** for presiding over an administration that rivals only FDR's White House when it comes to achieving legislative accomplishments designed to transform America's economy?

In the past two years, Biden guided three bills through Congress that allocate a whopping \$2T for infrastructure programs, high-tech semiconductor manufacturing, and renewable energy development.

*The Economist* believes "[Biden's blueprint](#) will change America profoundly." Yet Biden is the Rodney Dangerfield of American politics. He gets no respect.

*The Washington Post/ABC* poll released Feb. 6 finds that 62 percent of Americans think Biden has accomplished "not very much" or "little or nothing."

How could that be? Frankly, I think Biden's age has a lot to do with it. Biden comes across as lethargic and out of it. That image of a doddering old man stands in sharp contrast to the dynamism of his massive legislative victories.

Biden will be shut out in the second half by the Republican fringe, which is hellbent on launching investigation after investigation simply because the GOP has no political agenda.

If Biden is serious about running for another term, he better hope that Donald Trump gets the GOP nomination.

He is the only guy that sleepy Joe could whip.

**The Wall Street Journal follows Rupert Murdoch's marching orders** to trash and bury Trump.

VVIP Ventures and Icon Publishing on Feb. 6 agreed to buy the *National Enquirer*, which is described by the WSJ as "the scandal-plagued supermarket tabloid that facilitated a hush-money scheme involving former president Donald Trump." Nicely done.

The Journal explains how the *National Enquirer* helped bury stories that were damaging to Trump as he ran for president in 2016.

The Journal article is a little light on news about what VVIP and Icon plan to do with their new publication.

On second thought, who cares about the *Enquirer*?

**Walt Disney Co. caves to its Chinese paymaster** again... The entertainment giant cut an episode of "The Simpsons" that referred to "forced labor camps" from its streaming service in Hong Kong, [according to the Financial Times](#).

The episode showed Marge Simpson taking a virtual bike class with an image of the Great Wall. The instructor says: "Behold the wonder of China. Bitcoin mines, forced labor camps where children make smartphones."

The 2021 Hong Kong film censorship law does not apply to streaming services.

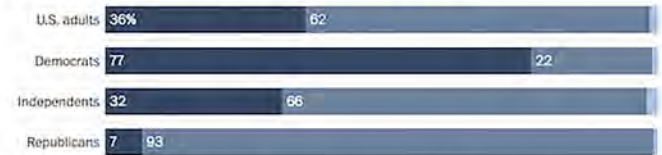
A professor at Hong Kong Baptist University told the FT that Disney may be censoring itself because it doesn't want to jeopardize its theme park business on the mainland.

**Take a bow, Nelson.** Triun Management Fund chief Nelson Peltz has called off his proxy fight against Walt Disney Co. because "Comeback Kid" CEO Bob Iger caved by un-

## Most Americans say Biden has accomplished 'not very much' or 'little or nothing' during his time in office

Q: During his time in office, would you say Biden has accomplished...

■ Not very much/Little or nothing ■ Great deal/Good amount ■ No opinion



Source: Jan. 27-Feb. 1, 2023, Post-ABC poll of 1,003 U.S. adults with an error margin of +/- 3.5 percentage points. Error margins are larger among subgroups. EMILY GUSHIN / THE WASHINGTON POST

veiling a restructuring plan that will slash 7000 jobs, cut costs by \$5.5B and restore the dividend by the end of the year.

"Management at Disney now plans to do everything that we wanted them to do," Peltz told CNBC on Feb. 9.

That is not quite right. Triun's "Restore the Magic" campaign also called for a CEO succession plan within two years.

Iger, 71, returned to the helm in November after the ouster of Bob Chapek.

Who is he grooming for the top job?

**HSBC sides with PRC.** A UK parliamentary report charges that the banking giant is complicit in human rights abuses against Hong Kong residents who fled the city due to China's crackdown on civil rights and freedom of expression.

More than 88K people have fled Hong Kong since 2021 and have been granted British residency.

The China-installed government in Hong Kong refused to acknowledge the UK visas and ordered a denial of pension payout to those who escaped the city.

There is now a big black stain on HSBC's reputation and its commitment to Hong Kongers.

**Pomposity unlimited...** *New York Times* CEO Meredith Kopit Levien says "2022 was the first full year of executing our strategy to become the essential subscription for every English-speaking person seeking to understand and engage with the world."

The company reported an 11.3 percent boost in revenues to \$2.3B but net income nosedived 21 percent to \$173.9M.

Perhaps, Levien needs to expand her sights in order to boost profitability. She should publish French, Spanish and Hindi language versions of the NYT.

**Not exactly the Gettysburg Address...** Massachusetts Representative Jack Auchincloss made history on Jan. 25 by delivering the first speech on the House floor that was created by the [artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT](#).

Fittingly, the 128-word speech was about a bill to create a U.S.-Israel AI Center in the United States.

The Democratic politico said it took five or six prompts to produce the right speech.

He said that applications for ChatGPT are tremendous but it's not intelligent. "It's more of a word prediction engine," he said.

—Kevin McCauley