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Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's Newsletter



The Inside News of  
PR and Marketing  
Communications

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## FLORIDA CITRUS SEEKS PR FOR CANADA

The Florida Dept. of Citrus is looking for a firm to develop a PR plan to support the sale of fresh oranges, grapefruit and juices in Canada.

It has budgeted \$800K to \$1.2M per-year for the two-year contract. The pact has an option to renew for an additional three years.



The desired PR firm will have the capability to operate throughout Canada, but especially in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

It will have experience managing customer engagement and handling retail marketing programs from both a consumer and trade angle, according to FDOC's RFP.

The firm will provide media and influencer outreach, social media, digital design development, surveys and research services.

Proposals are due Feb. 7. Send five copies in an envelope labeled "RFP #1908, Canada Retail Marketing and Public Relations" to:

Florida Department of Citrus; Dianne Screws, Director of Purchasing & Support Services; 605 E Main Street; Bartow, FL 33830

Click [here](#) for the RFP.

## TWITTER, GOOGLE VET PROSSER TO EDELMAN

Jim Prosser, a Twitter and Google veteran, has signed on at Edelman as managing director-corporate affairs & advisory services for the US western region.

Based in San Francisco, he will handle corporate strategy, narrative and reputation when he joins the No. 1 independent firm on Jan. 20.



Jim Prosser

At Twitter, Prosser headed corporate, revenue and policy communications during a four-year run. He guided the platform through its IPO and handled the high-profile return of co-founder Jack Dorsey to the helm.

Earlier, he served as manager of communications and public affairs at Google, dealing with financial, intellectual property and global litigation.

More recently, Prosser was head of communications and public policy as SoFi, consumer financial technology firm. He exited SoFi in August following a three-year stint and has been consulting private and public companies.

## W2O ACQUIRES 21GRAMS

W2O Group has acquired New York-based healthcare advertising firm 21GRAMS. Financial terms of the transaction were not publicly disclosed.

21GRAMS, which provides strategic and creative marketing, advertising and patient/medical education services, was founded by CEO Robert Blink in 2018.



Jim Weiss (left)  
and Robert Blink

"This acquisition follows a strategy by W2O to accelerate its vision of becoming the premier analytics-driven, technology-enabled healthcare marketing and communications company of the future," W2O founder and CEO Jim Weiss told *O'Dwyer's*.

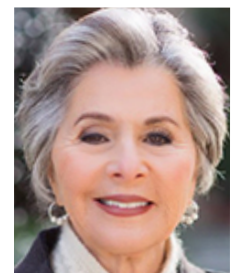
21GRAMS will retain its name in light of the acquisition. No forthcoming changes were reported to the agency's leadership team or staff, and the agency will remain in its current Midtown Manhattan office.

In November, W2O acquired London-based scientific and medical communications firm ISO.Health as well as Montclair, NJ-based "scientific visualization" company Radius Digital Science. Those deals followed W2O's October acquisition of Philadelphia-based medical and scientific communications shop Arcus Medica.

## EX-SENATOR BOXER MOVES TO MERCURY

Former California Senator Barbara Boxer has joined Omnicom's Mercury public affairs unit in Los Angeles as co-chair. The 79-year-old Democrat served two-terms in the Senate (1993-2017) and five terms in the House (1983-1993). Senator Kamala Harris succeeded Boxer.

In Congress, Boxer advocated for women's equality, healthcare, transportation, environmental protection and combating global warming. She chaired the Senate's environment and public works committee and vice chaired the Senate's select committee on ethics.



Barbara Boxer

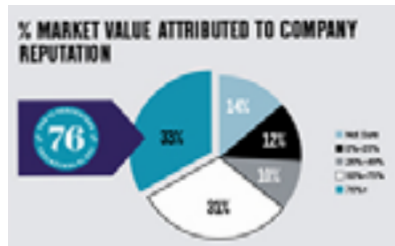
Kieran Mahoney, Mercury CEO, said Boxer earned respect from both her Democratic and Republican colleagues and "was a model for female leadership in the political sphere."

Boxer is Mercury's first female co-chair. She will offer strategic counsel on issues and the legislative process to staffers in Mercury's 22-office network.

## **CORPORATE REP DRIVES MARKET VALUE**

While business leaders across the board are becoming increasingly aware of the strong ties between corporate reputation and the bottom line, a group of execs who say reputation is a particularly important factor in a company's market value are pointing the way to how those reputations can be built and maintained.

"The State of Corporate Reputation in 2020: Everything Matters Now," a survey conducted by Weber



Shandwick in partnership with KRC Research, terms that group the "76 Percenters," those execs who think that more than three-quarters of their company's market value can be directly linked to its reputation. For the study as a whole, respondents said that 63 percent of their company's market value was driven by reputation.

The differences between the 76 Percenters and the overall sample starts at the top. Four out of five 76 percenters say the reputation of their CEO is directly tied to the reputation of the company. Only 58 percent of the total sample make that claim.

Out of the 23 "reputation drivers" presented to survey respondents, the 76 Percenters assigned every one more importance than did the group as a whole. Some of the biggest gaps were in community relations (11 percentage points—65 percent vs. 54 percent), industry leadership, corporate culture and environmental responsibility (a 10 percentage-point gap for all three).

The role of marketing and communication also ranks higher for the 76 Percenters, with 63 percent calling it an important driver of their reputations. For all respondents, the number was 55 percent.

The 76 Percenters are more likely to monitor their company's reputation, with 83 percent saying they do so, as opposed to 71 percent for the overall survey.

In the overall survey, most respondents gave the reputation of both their company (87 percent) and their CEO (82 percent) high marks. That positive attitude toward company reputation seems to be a worldwide phenomenon, ranging from 98 percent in India and China to 75 percent in South Korea.

The general study also found that reputation depends on an ever widening array of factors—from quality of products and services to corporate culture and purpose—resulting in what the study author's call an "omnidriven" reputation landscape.

"Companies can no longer solely focus on and prioritize just a few key drivers of reputation," the study notes. "Everything matters to reputation today. Reputation's day of judgement has certainly arrived in full force."

"The State of Corporate Reputation in 2020" surveyed 2,227 executives worldwide. Respondents were in mid- to high-level positions at companies with at \$500 million in revenue in developed markets and \$250 million in less developed markets.

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

The Pollack PR Marketing Group has been retained by **BlueGreen Water Technologies**, a global cleantech company dedicated to solving the problem of algal blooms in drinking water, recreational, and agricultural waterbodies. "Our work will help amplify BlueGreen's simple and economical technology and raise awareness for BlueGreen as it works to eliminate the toxic algae epidemic," said PPMG president Stefan Pollack. The company says its Lake Guard technology has been successfully deployed in thousands of commercial applications around the world, where it has demonstrated a rapid reduction of toxic species' levels in the water.



**Diffusion** has been named public relations agency of record in the U.S. and UK for **Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni**, a historic 5-star hotel on Italy's Lake Como. Diffusion is responsible for corporate and consumer media relations for the hotel, which has been family owned since 1918. The agency is also tasked with elevating the property's brand awareness amongst consumers, travelers and event planners, employing press trips to showcase GHVS and a media seeding program to garner coverage.

A marketing and communications team from **The Purpose Collaborative**, a network composed of 40+ social-purpose driven firms, boutiques and subject matter experts from around the world, is working as agency of record for **FIRST**, a global robotics community that prepares young people for the future. The Purpose Collaborative team includes **Carol Cone ON PURPOSE**, **RF|Binder** and **Passion Point Collective**, the agency started up last year by former Ketchum executive vp Martin Peterzell. FIRST offers PreK-12 students hands-on robotics programs that leave them with a sense of accomplishment and the understanding that they can do anything with their collective skills, leadership and confidence.



**Carolyn Izzo Integrated Communications** is partnering with **Palladium Hotel Group**, the seventh-largest hotel chain in Spain. CIIC will lead PR efforts for Grand Palladium Hotels & Resorts and TRS Hotels brands located in Mexico and the Caribbean. The chain has 50 hotels and more than 14,000 rooms in six countries: Spain, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Italy and Brazil.

**Imagine PR** has been appointed PR representative for **Tswalu Kalahari** in South Africa and **Fregate Island Private** in the Seychelles. Imagine will develop comprehensive public relations strategies for both clients, employing traditional media, influencer marketing and brand partnerships. In August 2019, Tswalu Kalahari reopened its main camp, The Motse, following an extensive five-month renovation project. Fregate Island Private has 16 villas, which are being completely redone in 2021. Both properties emphasize conservation as part of the travel experience.



## THE ART OF THE APOLOGY

Elton John's 1976 song "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word" could be the unfortunate theme for too many organizations that find themselves in the throes of a crisis in which they were slow to own up to the cause of the problem.

In our daily lives, we are accustomed to saying "I'm sorry" for even the smallest personal or professional offense, intended or unintended. But in the C Suites of too many private, public or nonprofit entities, there is often resistance or reticence to timely taking responsibility – for fear of deepening the damage to the brand. Ironically, that delay in shouldering the mistake frequently is the trigger to creating the crisis after the crisis: inaction, insensitivity, inertia that plunges the organization into a worsening, damaging spiral.



**Ron Sachs**

In the public relations profession, we are often called on to guide clients through the challenging process of issuing a public apology. It's so common that the art of the apology has spawned its own sub-genre of books and articles. Who was sorry, sorrier, and sorriest? Who offered the egregious "sorry-not-sorry"? Who had to apologize for their apology?

In today's 24/7 social media environment, any post or comment can potentially attract global attention, good or bad. Trolls and critics will always find an audience somewhere, so it's important to accept that no apology will satisfy everyone. Some steadfast rules apply, however, and some high-profile examples provide lessons for how to do it right—or very wrong.

Facing global scrutiny, regulatory action, and significant liability after two deadly crashes of their company's aircraft, Boeing corporate leadership offered plenty of statements of sympathy. The statements themselves, however, were cluttered with qualifying clauses that seemed designed to deflect responsibility and minimize the gravity of Boeing's situation. (It's hard to imagine any Boeing passenger or business customer really being comforted by this kind of language: "As part of our standard practice following any accident, we examine our aircraft design and operation, and when appropriate, institute product updates to further improve safety.")

A devastating delay of more than three weeks elapsed before Boeing Chairman, President, and CEO Dennis Muilenburg finally took responsibility and apologized (and then kept apologizing): "We at Boeing are sorry for the lives lost in the recent 737 MAX accidents." It's a modern textbook example of how not to do it.

In stark contrast, let's revisit the quick and sincere apology issued by Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson after two African American men were wrongly handcuffed and arrested at the urging of a store manager in Philadelphia, merely because they were in the store. Almost immediately after footage of the incident went viral on

social media, Johnson went public. He apologized, took ownership of the mistake personally, and embarked on a weeks-long apology tour, saying he was sorry in interviews and on virtually every available Starbucks communications channel. He also briefly shut down every Starbucks store to engage all staff in compulsory, renewed sensitivity training.

"The circumstances surrounding the incident and the outcome in our store on Thursday were reprehensible. They were wrong," Johnson said in a "Good Morning, America" interview only four days after the arrests. "And for that, I personally apologize to the two gentlemen who visited our store."

Another quick and effective apology came from former NBA player Charles Barkley, now a sports TV analyst, after a reporter tweeted about this weird response to a question: "I don't hit women, but if I did I'd hit you."

Not only did Barkley apologize the next day on Twitter, but the reporter retweeted the apology from her own Twitter account. The apology itself is distilled perfection: "My comment was inappropriate and unacceptable. It was an attempted joke that wasn't funny at all. There's no excuse for it and I apologize."

Of course, a quick "apology" doesn't help if it's not really an apology, as the Houston Astros demonstrated this past season. After *Sports Illustrated* reported an aggressive outburst by Astros assistant general manager Brandon Taubman directed at female reporters, the baseball team quickly criticized the story. Taubman's accompanying apology: "I used inappropriate language for which I am deeply sorry and embarrassed" was watered down with the "I'm sorry if anyone was offended" qualifier that marks a classic non-apology apology. It closed by also challenging the article.

After a few days of unsuccessful damage control, only a full retraction and apology from Astros owner Jim Crane could finally quell the controversy: "On behalf of the Astros organization, I want to personally apologize for the statement we issued on Monday, October 21st. We were wrong and I am sorry that we initially questioned your professionalism. We retract that statement, and I assure you that the Houston Astros will learn from this experience."

If there's one takeaway from 2019 for the public relations profession, it may be that our overly communicative modern society must constantly be fed facts and truth in telling our stories in good times, or bad. Especially after a mistake, or in the throes of crisis, an apology delayed or denied in the court of public opinion only feeds negative reactions to those non-messages that can take the form of outrage and activism.

"Sorry" can be the hardest word for too many organizations drowning in a crisis, especially when it's compounded by mishandling timely messaging necessary to navigate through those choppy waters. That makes our informed counsel more important than ever.

Apologize—or not—at your own risk.

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*Ron Sachs is Founder and CEO of Sachs Media Group.*

## **OGILVY CUTS 80 STAFFERS**

Ogilvy has cut 80 staffers, which is about four percent of its workforce, following a “challenging second half of 2019 and a cautious outlook for year 2020,” according to a memo from CEO John Seifert.

“Despite important new business wins, we face client budget cuts and pricing pressures; ongoing shifts in the type and mix of work we do; and the dynamics of a project-based business model, which makes full-year forecasting and financial management very challenging,” Siefert wrote in the memo that was obtained by *Advertising Age*.



**Leslie Sims**

The WPP property is in the midst of a restructuring, which will result in “eliminating a whole layer of leadership roles” across the U.S., Siefert added.

As part of the reorganization, U.S. chief creative officer Leslie Sims is leaving the firm.

She spent 20 years at WPP’s Y&R and Interpublic’s McCann before taking the Ogilvy job in December 2018.

## **ACCENTURE ALUM TAYLOR CHECKS IN AT MSK**

Roxanne Taylor, former Accenture chief marketing and communications officer, will join Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center on Feb. 3 as its chief marketing and communications officer.

At MSK, Taylor will be responsible for shaping and enhancing the brand and will have accountability for building its long-term equity with all stakeholders. She will lead an integrated marketing and communications function focused on helping to grow and differentiate MSK’s brand presence worldwide.

Since leaving Accenture in September 2018 after 23 years, Taylor has served on the board of directors at Whalar, which provides tech-driven influencer marketing solutions, as well as at Pure Storage, a provider of all-flash data hardware and software solutions; and OpenX, the world’s largest independent advertising exchange.

She is also on the boards of the Association of Executive Search and Leadership Consultants, and the US chapter of Reporters Sans Frontières.

## **WEISS PR REBRANDS**

Weiss PR is rebranding as Pugh & Tiller PR as president Ray Weiss turns over the leadership reins to executive VP Matthew Pugh and co-founder Jessica Tiller.

Weiss will take on the senior counsel position, focused on strategic direction of the firm and advising key clients.



He said planning for the management transition has been underway for some time and the name change will help Pugh and Tiller bolster their reputations as leaders in the PR business.

The firm is relocating from Baltimore to Annapolis to increase its proximity to the Washington market.

Pugh will continue to lead the firm’s tech practice, while Tiller is responsible for its insurance, employee benefits and commercial real estate practices.

## **SAN MATEO, CA SEEKS POLLUTION PR HELP**

The County of San Mateo, California, is looking for an agency that can spread the word about its Pollution Prevention Program.

The Bay Area County, which covers most of the San Francisco Peninsula, wants to educate and motivate residents about recycling, safe food sharing practices at schools and the reuse or safe management of household hazardous waste as well as the other initiatives and programs designed to help protect public health and the environment.



Scope of the work includes media buying, social and digital marketing, developing and implementing “behavior change” campaigns, graphic design work (posters, flyers, signs, brochures or any deliverable needed as part of the campaign) community outreach and communications consulting.

Excepted duration of the contract is 36 months.

Proposals are due by 5:00 p.m. (PST) on Thurs., Feb. 13.

All proposals should be submitted electronically via the [Public Purchase website](https://www.publicpurchase.com/gems/register/vendor/register) and all bidding agencies must register online with the County of San Mateo: <https://www.publicpurchase.com/gems/register/vendor/register>.

RFP # is: 59000-20-001RFP

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

## **FASHION PR ICON FILIPOWSKI DIES AT 58**

Ed Filipowski, who handled public relations for many of the world’s top fashion brands, including Tom Ford, Gucci, Alexander McQueen, Givenchy, Versace and Marc Jacobs, died on Jan. 10.

Filipowski and Julie Mannion took the helm at fashion PR agency KCD in 1991, following the deaths of agency partners Kezia Keeble and John Duka. Paul Cavaco, the third of the agency’s founders, subsequently sold the agency to Filipowski and Mannion.

KCD was credited with reshaping the image of fashion PR, giving it a professionalism and openness that it had previously lacked. “Everything was pragmatic. Everything was about being correct,” KCD client Anna Sui told the *New York Times*.



**Ed Filipowski**

In addition to its designer clients, KCD has also worked with the Council of Fashion Designers of America and fast-fashion chain H&M.

Filipowski was “far more than a particularly brilliant public relations executive,” said Anna Wintour, *Vogue* editor in chief and artistic director of Condé Nast, said in an article on *Vogue.com*. “He was always able to make kindness and respect central to every single thing he did.”

KCD said that contributions in the name of Filipowski can be made to two organizations—the CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund, [InMemoryOfEdFilipowski@cfda.com](mailto:InMemoryOfEdFilipowski@cfda.com), and [The Center: The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center](#).

## **GEN Z SHOWS SURPRISING BRAND LOYALTY**

Gen Z may be turning constant change into a way of life, but when it comes to their relationships with brands, they're looking for a little stability, according to a study conducted by DeVries Global.



About three out of four Gen Z respondents (born between 1995 and 2015) say that they shift what they are thinking about or focusing on to keep up with what's going on the world around them. More than half (53 percent) say they have more than one profile on some social media accounts, with about one in six adding that they are not consistent in how they portray themselves on social media. Nearly half (49 percent) say they go to bed with no idea what the next day will hold, resulting in 40 percent calling their lives inconsistent and unpredictable.

While these traits have led to claims that Gen Z cannot commit to anything and is lacking in loyalty, the study found that the opposite is often true.

Gen Z respondents put a premium on consistency and familiarity when it comes to brands. Almost seven in ten (69 percent) said they find comfort in the familiar, with 85 percent saying they prefer to buy from familiar brands over those that are new or non-mainstream.

More than three quarters (76 percent) say they are loyal to brands, and 51 percent say they are currently committed to at least one brand.

But it seems that companies are dropping the ball with regard to capitalizing on that loyalty. Just three sectors—tech, snack foods and restaurants—were judged as understanding Gen Z by more than half of respondents.

The study provides pointers for brands that want to make a connection with Gen Z. Making sure you have a strong YouTube presence should be top of mind. Other important strategies include getting people to start talking about your brand, and ensuring that your executives talk in a language that Gen Z will understand and appreciate.

## **FTI PUTS HAWKEYE 360 IN DC ORBIT**

FTI Government Affairs represents satellite company Hawkeye 360 on defense and budgetary matters in Washington.

Former Democratic Congressman Bud Cramer, whose Alabama district is home to NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and the Army's aviation & missile command, leads the FTI team, which includes John Czerwinski, aide to former Virginia Republican Congressman Frank Wolf.



Herndon, VA-based Hawkeye says it's the first commercial company to use formation flying satellites to create a new class of radio frequency data analytics.

It received a contract from the National Reconnaissance Office last month. The Federal Communications Commission also gave Hawkeye approval to launch and operate 15 satellites for radio-frequency mapping from low-Earth orbit.

Hawkeye, which has raised more than \$100M, counts Airbus, Raytheon and Sumitomo Corp. of America among its investors.

## **ON THE MOVE**

**Hill+Knowlton Strategies** has named **Avra Lorrimer** to head its New York office. Lorrimer was previously managing director of consumer packaged goods at H+K London and served as the WPP lead for Ford of Europe. **Orla Moran** will succeed Lorrimer in H+K London's consumer packaged goods practice. Before coming to H+K, Lorrimer was an associate director at Ogilvy and Edelman. Moran joins H+K from Golin, where she was an associate director on their consumer team.



**Avra Lorrimer**

**Publicis Health** has named **Jennifer Shirley** president of Saatchi & Saatchi Wellness, effective immediately. Shirley most recently served as president of Havas Life Metro, the healthcare strategy division of Havas Health & You. She has held several other leadership roles within the Publicis network and replaces JD Cassidy, who previously served as president and managing director of SSW. Cassidy is taking on the role of EVP, client engagement strategy for Publicis Health.

**NVE Experience Agency** has brought on **Brian Rubin** as vice president of communications, a newly created role. Rubin comes to NVE from PMK\*BNC, where he was VP, brand communications & marketing. He led the firm's special events division, working with such clients as the Academy of Country Music Awards, American Film Institute and Amazon Prime Video. At NVE, Rubin will lead strategic communications and event publicity for the agency's clients in addition to overseeing corporate communications.

## **NEWS OF FIRMS**

**Wise Public Relations** is merging with boutique consultancy **Zimmerman Strategic Communications**. Zimmerman managing director Robert Zimmerman will serve as global managing director and chief of staff for the combined entity, responsible for overseeing staff, operations, and client relations while working to expand and strengthen Wise PR's sports, media, entertainment and crisis/reputation management capabilities. Wise and Zimmerman have collaborated on a number of client accounts over the past several years.

Philadelphia-based **Flackable**, which represents financial and professional services firms, has launched its All-Access Client Portal. The portal, available exclusively to Flackable clients, delivers campaign access and transparency through real-time, on-demand campaign metrics and status reporting. Flackable began beta testing the portal last August among its existing clients.

**Gavin**, a digitally focused agency headquartered in York, PA, has opened an office in Lancaster. The agency currently represents such Lancaster-area clients as Kunzler Meats and Community First Fund. It also has an office in Harrisburg. The opening of the new office follows Gavin's 2019 acquisition of Holberg Design, an addition that expanded its team to more than 20 people.





## COMMENTARY

**BlackRock head Larry Fink has warned CEOs** that their companies will fall by the financial wayside if they don't embrace purpose.



Larry Fink

In his Jan. 14 letter to CEOs, Fink wrote "serving stakeholders and embracing purpose is becoming increasingly central to the way that companies understand their role in society."

In short, "a company cannot achieve long-term profits without embracing purpose and considering the needs of a broad range of stakeholders."

A pharmaceutical firm may jack up prices or a bank may take advantage of its customers to maximize short-term gains, but those actions are going to catch up with them over the long haul.

"By contrast a strong sense of purpose and a commitment to stakeholders helps a company connect more deeply to its customers and adjust to the changing demands of society," wrote Fink. "Ultimately, purpose is the engine of long-term profitability."

BlackRock, which is the world's biggest asset manager with \$7T in investments, is putting sustainability at the center of its investment approach.

It will drop investments that have a high sustainability-related risk, such as coal producers, launch new products that screen fossil fuels and strengthen its commitment to transparency.

Fink wrote that climate change presents a long-term crisis and companies have a responsibility and an economic imperative to give shareholders a clear picture of their preparedness.

"Disclosure should be a means to achieving a more sustainable and inclusive capitalism," he wrote. "Companies must be deliberate and committed to embracing purpose and serving all stakeholders—your shareholders, customers, employees and the communities where you operate."

**Citibank finds purpose.** The bank has unveiled a \$150M fund to invest in "double bottom line" companies that are committed to workforce development, sustainability, physical/social infrastructure (ways to improve housing, healthcare and transportation issues) and financial capability (solutions to improve access to the financial system).

The Citi Impact Fund is the largest such fund launched by a bank using its own capital. The bank will make individual investments of \$3M to \$4M in companies that have demonstrated proof of concept, built a customer base, secured earlier funding and exhibit the ability to scale.

The funding will be allocated exclusively to businesses led or owned by women and minorities.

**Hillary Clinton warned Jan. 17 of the danger from "fake news"** and the outright rejection of facts that are deemed by some as inconvenient.

Appearing at the Television Critics Assn., the former First Lady, Senator and Secretary of State said: "You can choose not to vaccinate your children but there are facts. You can choose not to believe in climate change, but there are facts. And somehow we've got to shoulder that responsibility not only at a political leadership level but literally at the citizen, activist, concerned human being level."

She said it's hard to maintain American democracy if citizens can't agree on basic facts.

Taking a swipe at president Trump, she recalled a time when the Washington political scene wasn't in full 24/7 pantsuits on fire mode. "It wasn't so long ago that we actually had a President that we didn't have to worry every morning when we woke up about what was going to happen that day, or what crazy tweet would threaten war or some other awful outcome," she said.

Clinton spoke at the Hollywood group's winter press to plug "Hillary," a four-part documentary on Hulu about her political career.

**Joe Biden isn't a fan of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg** and his social platform and he has a pretty good idea about how to curtail its clout.

The former VP told the *New York Times* editorial board that he wants to trash Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. That measure says online platforms aren't responsible for what runs on their sites.

That's sacrilegious to Zuckerberg and his allies, who maintain that junking Section 230 would destroy free expression on the Internet.

Biden would probably call that "malarkey" and demand Facebook own up to what gets posted on the site. After all, Facebook is more than just a little Internet outfit.

Biden told the Times Facebook "is propagating falsehoods they know to be false, and we should be setting standards not unlike the Europeans are doing relative to privacy." He wants Facebook to suffer the same civic penalties that the *New York Times* would, if it decided to run stories that it knew were false.

He did credit Zuckerberg for taking down a 30-second ad in October from an independent political action committee that accused Biden of blackmailing Ukrainian officials.

His campaign sent a letter to Facebook saying the ad contained "transparently false allegations, prominently debunked by every major media outlet in the country over recent weeks" and asked that it be taken down.

Team Biden viewed its demand as "a most basic test" for Facebook.

Zuckerberg passed that one. Let's see how he does on the next exam.

—Kevin McCauley