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BROOKFIELD ZOO HUNTS FOR PR PARTNER

The Chicago Zoological Society is hunting for a PR firm to handle strategic communications to support the missions and goals of its Brookfield Zoo.



Located 14 miles from downtown Chicago, BZ is the largest suburban attraction in Cook County. It draws more than 2M visitors a year.

Opened in 1934, BZ was considered cutting edge for its bar-less enclosures and was one of the first zoos to employ

animal behavioral specialists, nutritionists, endocrinologists, pathologists, and geneticists.

The hired PR firm will develop a comprehensive communications plan aligned with BZ's mission, values and key objectives with an emphasis on projects that advance its future master plan initiatives.

The firm will position key BZ execs as thought leaders in the zoological and conservation sectors and, provide real-time support and guidance during critical incidents, as needed.

BZ expects its PR partner to begin work on April 1. Proposals are due Jan. 22 at the CZS' [purchasing department](#).

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

STATE VET GHORI-AHMAD TO APCO PA LEAD

Safiya Ghori-Ahmad, who served as special advisor on Pakistan and Afghanistan for Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, has signed as senior director and global PA lead at APCO Worldwide's Washington office.

She also served on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, focusing on economic, political risk and elections in South Asia.

Ghori-Ahmad joins the fifth largest independent PR firm from McLarty Associates, where she advised investors and multinationals on government affairs and go-to-market strategies.

APCO CEO Brad Staples said Ghori-Ahmad has the command of the intricate relationships at the intersection of government and

business in DC, and key markets.

She has the "experience and insights to further augment APCO's global network and market-leading ability to help clients in multiple geographies simultaneously," he added.



Safiya Ghori-Ahmad

SUBJECT MATTER+KIVVIT REBRANDS AS AVOQ

Subject Matter+Kivvit, which joined forces in May, has rebranded as Avoq, an integrated shop with more than 200 professionals in Washington, New York, Asbury Park (NJ), Miami and Chicago.

Avoq offers government relations, PA, strategic communications, media relations, digital, website, app development, research, data analysis and advertising services.

It begins life with 14 partners and former Subject Matter CEO Nicole Cornish at the helm.

She said members of the leadership group "will foster and inspire the one-team culture of collaboration and excellence that sets us apart."

Joining Cornish in the executive suite are COO Molly Scherrman, CFO Dave Metzger, and managing partners Eric Sedler, Steve Elmendorf, Jimmy Ryan, Dan Sallick and Paul Frick.

Coral Tree Partners, a Los Angeles-based private equity firm, owns Avoq.

[Kivvit took the No. 18 slot in O'Dwyer's 2023 rankings](#) of independent PR firms with fee income of \$39.5M. It was Chicago's fourth largest firm with fees of \$13.1M.

Subject Matter did not rank.



DENTONS REPS DR ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

The Dominican Republic has hired Dentons Global Advisors to a \$1.4M contract to raise support for its human rights policy program, and strengthen its relationship with the US government.

Human Rights Watch reports that structural racial discrimination, inequality, criminalization of abortion and the excessive use of force by the National Police are major human rights concerns in the DR.

DGA is to research, identify and advocate for human rights best practices, recommendations and communications strategies for DR's Minister of the Presidency Joel Adrian Santos Echavarria.

The firm may engage in political activities for the DR, including PR counseling, lobbying and distribution of informational material to the US government officials, thought leaders and members of the media.

DGA's three-member DR team includes partners Jose Miguel Vivanco, who was Americas director for Human Rights Watch; Kristin Bahnsen, part of the firm's intelligence offering; and associate partner Andres Garcia Palaez, an alum of FTI Consulting.



FL COUNTY PUSHES EARLY LEARNING PR

Osceola County, which is home to more than 400K Floridians, is shopping for a firm to handle a \$975K marketing and outreach program for its school readiness and voluntary prekindergarten programs.



Its Early Learning Coalition is looking for a campaign that increases the number of families applying for the SR/VPK services, and boosts community awareness of the importance of early learning.

The SR program offers “financial assistance to eligible low-income families for early education and care so they can become financially self-sufficient,” according to Osceola’s “invitation to negotiate.”

Responses, due Jan. 22, go to: Early Learning Coalition of Osceola County, ATTN: Carmen Garcia, RE: ITN#2023MOC, 1631 E Vine Street, Ste. E, Kissimmee, FL 34744.

Or by email: cgarcia@elcosceola.org

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

EDELMAN TABS GRAHAM TO LEAD US UNIT

Kirsty Graham, global CEO of Edelman’s practice and sectors unit, will take over the US operation on Feb. 1.

She succeeds Lisa Osborne Ross, who took a “leave of absence” in September and exited the firm in October.

Graham led strategy for Edelman’s global brand and health, technology, energy and food & beverage sectors.



Kirsty Graham

She has chaired the global health operation since joining Edelman in 2020 from Pfizer, where she was SVP-corporate affairs for their biopharmaceuticals group.

At Pfizer, Graham handled policy, PA and communications for the medicines business.

As the head of Edelman’s biggest region, Graham will oversee about 2,500 staffers in a dozen offices from her perch in New York.

She will report to Matthew Harrington, global president/COO and acting US CEO.

SHARLACH TO STEP DOWN AT JEFFREYGROUP

JeffreyGroup chairman and founder Jeffrey Sharlach is stepping down at the end of March. Before founding the agency in 1993, Sharlach held leadership posts at Carl Byoir & Associates (now part of Hill & Knowlton), Burson-Marsteller (now BCW) and Saatchi & Saatchi.



Jeffrey Sharlach

Under his tenure, JeffreyGroup expanded from its roots in Miami to open offices in locations including Buenos Aires, Mexico City and São Paulo. Brian Burlingame, who took over as CEO when Sharlach stepped down from that post in 2015, will continue leading the firm. “This year seemed like the perfect time to

retire from JeffreyGroup,” Sharlach said. “We’ve successfully transitioned from private ownership to proudly being part of WPP and H&K, offering our clients access to an expanding range of world-class resources.”

NEWS OF FIRMS

Stagwell is partnering with connected TV advertising company **MNTN** to offer brands a comprehensive set of buying solutions that combine MNTN’s Performance TV platform with Stagwell Marketing Cloud products.

Those products include generative and predictive AI platform PRophet, influencer discovery and campaign management platform Koalified and ReachTV, the largest streaming television network targeting travelers in airports. The partnership is aimed at letting brand campaigns on television seamlessly coexist with other digital channels. Stagwell also acquires **Team Epiphany**, a consumer marketing agency that specializes in cultural relevance, experiential, progressive multi-cultural marketing and influencer integration. Team Epiphany will continue to operate independently as part of Stagwell’s Constellation network, which includes 72andSunny, Instrument and The Harris Poll. It is led by founder and managing partner Coltrane Curtis and managing partner Lisa Chu, who will remain in their current positions.



Hill & Knowlton introduces the H&K Academy, a training concept designed to upskill communications professionals. The H&K Academy launches in the UK with ten modules themed around ESG, DE&I, AI & technology innovation, and social & influencer. Curated by in house communication specialists, the training sessions can be delivered individually or as a program of multiple modules, tailored to the needs and levels of experience of each client. The offer builds on H&K’s record of media and communications performance training for executives.

Thompson & Co. Public Relations owner and CEO Jennifer Thompson is teaming up with Blueprint Alaska president Sarah Erkman Ward and Heather Handyside, who was most recently chief communications officer at GCI, Alaska’s largest telecommunications provider, on a new corporate entity that will formally combine Blueprint’s strategic advocacy agency and T&C’s public relations and digital services. Handyside is coming on as a partner in the combined firm.



Amy Rutkin

Rutkin Strategies, a consultancy practice, is launched by Amy Rutkin, who is retiring from her role as staff director to the House Judiciary Committee and long-time chief of staff to Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-NY). Rutkin Strategies is partnering with two women-owned government relations agencies, Kasirer of New York and NVG of Washington, DC., with Rutkin serving as a senior advisor to both firms.

5WPR launches a defense PR and aerospace PR vertical. Services offered to defense clients include messaging and positioning, media relations, initial public offering media strategy, new market expansion campaigns, visibility programs, content creation, sponsorships/partnerships, digital media campaigns, event planning, thought leadership and speaking opportunities. The vertical is led by a team of experts who possess a history of leading successful campaigns for defense and aerospace clients including Shield AI who 5W has assisted to expand their footprint and enhance their brand reputation.

FROM MISINFORMATION TO DISINFORMATION

Though misinformation and disinformation have similarities, they are distinct concepts with different origins and causes. And while misinformation can inadvertently undermine trust, those who engage in disinformation aim to undermine trust in institutions and advance their agenda for personal or political gain.

Misinformation is the dissemination or sharing of false or inaccurate information without the intent to deceive. It occurs when individuals unintentionally spread misleading information due to ignorance, misunderstanding, or failure—for whatever reason—to check their “facts.”



Gil Bashe

How the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) stumbled in their public communication around COVID-19 inoculations provides an example of something that resulted in widespread misinformation. One agency mistake followed another, allowing “alternative facts” and opinions presented as facts to creep into the vacuum left in the wake of CDC missteps.

Misinformation is the Domino to Confusion

The cascade of communication errors had impacts that affected life and death. The public became confused, and as the scientific story evolved, it became hard for consumers to maintain confidence in the public health system despite its many effective advancements and measures designed to protect their health. This situation illustrates the lasting effect of misinformation: the growing loss of public trust.

Health officials and care providers aren’t alone; the misinformation swirl also resulted in a documented, dramatic decline in public trust in government and science. While many blame social media for the drop in consumer confidence in institutions, this isn’t entirely the case. Responsibility for this decline in trust falls squarely on those working to use misinformation, often disseminated like a virus through social media, to their advantage.

Organizations can retract inaccurate reporting later, but as we’ve seen in the wake of the 2020 election or events in the Middle East, they don’t always. As we have allowed misinformation to become “just another blooper,” a slippery slope makes it possible for a more nefarious form of willful lies to seep into the news flow.

Disinformation Signals Something More Dangerous

While passing misinformation is, by definition, unintentional, disinformation involves deliberately spreading false or misleading information to deceive and manipulate public opinion to achieve a specific goal or advance an agenda.

Communications professionals must never engage in disinformation. If an attorney takes part in similar fraud, they can be disbarred. While there is no analog for disbarment in communications, we can lose our credibility and good names by using disinformation.

Doomed to Repeat the Past

From the “Greatest Generation” to Gen X, we have seen—we see—leaders who have mastered the art of propaganda. These voices demonize “the other,” justifying oppressive actions and encouraging followers to act in the interests of what they suggest is “the right way.”

In the case of the January 6th Insurrection, disinformation

may have also shaped public perception. Supporters and critics shared and continue to share inaccurate information about election results, contributing to polarized views.

While trust in democracy is being attacked, it hasn’t ended there. The media itself, seen since the founding of this country as a critical check illuminating the government’s actions for all to see, is experiencing greatly lowered levels of trust. As part of efforts to further undermine Americans’ trust in our nation’s institutions, academia has recently become the focus of an orchestrated disinformation campaign, as shown in recent revelations about the resignation of Harvard President Claudine Gay.

Disinformation is the Death of Truth

As we’ve seen, the critical difference between misinformation and disinformation lies in intent.

Mistakes—unintentional misinformation—happen and must be corrected or nipped in the bud; real leaders must acknowledge errors and take responsibility for them. These same institutions and leaders cannot engage in willful disinformation or conduct campaigns built on exploiting it; doing so is unethical and dangerous.

And yet, the silence from the communications industry on these issues has been deafening. As communicators, we have a responsibility to recognize misinformation and disinformation and stamp out both. Our continued relevance and ability to positively impact society depends upon that understanding and our actions. The communications profession remains vibrant and viable in nations where truth and trust guide our actions.

We relinquish these responsibilities at our peril. Where and when disinformation reigns, truth no longer matters and democracy withers. That we can see this possibility already becoming an acceptable reality is truly frightening.

Gil Bashe is chair, global health and purpose at [FINN Partners](#).

CHULA VISTA, CA CALLS FOR PR SUPPORT

The city of Chula Vista, CA is looking for an agency that can provide public relations and social media management services.

The Downtown Chula Vista Association, the association that oversees Chula Vista’s downtown commercial district, is seeking an agency with destination marketing experience that can plan, coordinate, implement and administer a public relations campaign that enhances the district’s brand and promotes the area as a unique destination.

Scope of the work includes promoting downtown Chula Vista as a premier destination; promoting special events, seasonal promotions and initiatives. Terms of the contract run from March 1, 2024, until February 28, 2025 with the option to extend the contract for an additional year. Budget for the initial term of the proposal is \$60,000 with an additional budget for social media advertising.

Proposals, due by 5:00 p.m. (PT) on Jan.23, can be emailed to: to: chris@newcityamerica.com, or mailed to: Dr. Gonzalo Quintero, President; c/o Downtown Chula Vista Association; 353 Third Avenue; Chula Vista, CA 91910

All questions should be directed to Brand Communication & Public Affairs Manager Chris Gomez, chris@newcityamerica.com, or by calling 619/454-1596.

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



TENEO TAPS BRUNSWICK GROUP ALUM BARK

Teneo has hired Anne Bark as managing director in its strategy and communications group in Amsterdam.



Anne Bark

She worked at Brunswick Group for more than a dozen years in London and Shanghai, handling financial communications and crisis matters. Bark also did a stint as a business analyst at Nike.

She joins Teneo from Porticus, where she did a three-year run as senior advisor for communications and PA.

Porticus, which has a staff of nearly 200, is a global philanthropic organization that is working with more than 700 partners in the areas of social justice, promoting faith-based communities, sustainability and education.

At Teneo, Bark will focus on the fast-moving consumer goods, healthcare and technology sectors.

POLLACK WINS RESORTS WORLD LAS VEGAS

[The Pollack Group](#) is selected by Resorts World Las Vegas to lead its national PR program and support its marketing efforts. TPG will focus on high impact earned media coverage and generating national attention and brand awareness. RWLV is the first integrated resort built on the Las Vegas strip in more than a decade and features a variety of amenities, including a spa, the largest pool complex on the Strip, casino gaming, dining and nightlife.



“TPG’s proven track record, strategic insights and creative prowess stood out during the selection process, making them the perfect choice to drive our brand narrative forward,” said RWLV director of public relations and communications Kassidy Krystek.

SENATE AIDES REP NIPPON’S USS TAKEOVER

Reggie Babin, who was chief counsel to now Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, and Hunter Bates, ex-chief of staff to Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, are working Nippon Steel’s \$14.9B takeover of United States Steel Corp.

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld’s Babin and Bates are supported by Brian Pomper, who was lead trade counsel at the Senate Finance Committee.



NIPPON STEEL

Pennsylvania’s Senators Bob Casey and John Fetterman oppose the deal. Casey said the country’s marquee steel company should remain under American ownership. Fetterman, who lives across the street from USS’ Edgar Thompson plant in Braddock, called the takeover “outrageous.”

Nippon claims the deal will strengthen the companies’ ability to meet the demand for high-growth steel. It promises to respect all collective bargaining agreements and maintain the USS name and HQ in Pittsburgh.

Teneo handles the US team for Nippon. The PR team includes Robert Mead, Americas chairman, and senior managing directors Monika Driscoll and Tucker Elcock.

SPOTIFY ALUM GROSSBERG TO FGS GLOBAL

Adam Grossberg, who was senior head of corporate communications at Spotify, has joined FGS Global as a partner in New York.

His previous positions include VP of corporate communications at CLEAR and chief communications officer at WebMD Health Corp.

In his new post, Grossberg will counsel clients on a range of matters including corporate positioning, reputation management and integrated communications.

“Adam’s extensive experience developing, strengthening and protecting the reputations of some of the world’s most innovative companies will be invaluable,” said CEO for FGS Global North America Winnie Lerner.



Adam Grossberg

KEY BISCAYNE, FL FLOATS PR RFP

The Village of Key Biscayne, Florida is looking for an agency that can provide strategic communication services.

The Miami-Dade County municipality, a residential community located on a seven-mile-long, two-mile-wide barrier island approximately six miles into Biscayne Bay, seeks a communications firm that can assist the village in strengthening its relationship with the community and regional partners.

Scope of the work includes: refreshing Key Biscayne’s brand and narrative framework; developing and implementing a strategic communications action plan; monitoring, evaluating and controlling the brand’s implementation; and reviewing and assessing the Key Biscayne’s website and making format, content and navigability suggestions to better align it with its brand.

Terms of the contract is set to run for one year with the option to extend for two additional one-year terms.

Proposals are due by 11:30 A.M. (ET) on January 31, and should be uploaded via [Key Biscayne’s portal on the procurement platform Demand Star](#).

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



JOELE FRANK DOES SOUTHWESTERN DEAL

[Joelle Frank](#) handles Southwestern Energy Co. as its agrees to merge with Chesapeake Energy Corp in an all-stock deal valued at \$7.4B that creates the largest natural gas producer in the US. Chesapeake CEO Nick Dell’Osso said the combination forms “the first U.S. based independent that can truly compete on an international scale.”

Bill Way, Southwestern CEO, said shareholders will be “able to participate in the substantial value creation and future growth opportunities of the combined company.”

The Chesapeake/Southwestern merger is the first major natural gas deal in the wave of US energy consolidation that has focused on oil companies.

More gas deals are anticipated as Chesapeake and Southwestern account for only seven percent of US gas production.

[Joelle Frank, Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher](#)’s Andrew Siegel and Jed Repko represent Southwestern.



64% OF PR PROS USE AI

The use of AI grew rapidly for PR pros in 2023, and it looks like that growth is set to continue through 2024, according to a report just released by public relations management platform Muck Rack.

The “[State of AI in PR January 2024](#)” study, which surveyed 1,001 PR pros from Nov. 2 to Dec. 14 of last year, found that 64 percent of them are already using generative AI in their work. That number is especially impressive when compared to the 28 percent who said they were using generative AI in Muck Rack’s study from March 2023.

Many of those not using it yet still are still to open to the idea. Almost a quarter (23 percent) said they “plan to explore generative AI,” while only 8 percent said they are undecided about using AI and 5 percent do not plan to explore it.

For those already using AI, writing social copy was the most frequently cited (64 percent) task. Other popular AI uses are research and writing press releases (both at 58 percent), crafting pitches (54 percent), and strategy and planning (43 percent).

A majority also say that AI has quality and efficiency benefits. More than half (52 percent) of respondents noted that AI made their work “somewhat better” and 22 percent said it resulted in work that was “much better.”

However, AI policies seem to be a bit less popular than AI usage. Only 21 percent of respondents said that they currently have an AI policy in the works, with 22 percent saying that they plan to have one in the future.

AI training is also lagging, with just 21 percent of respondents indicating that their company offers it to employees.

Brand and agencies had different views of when to disclose AI use. More than a third (35 percent) of PR pros working for brands said they expect their agencies to disclose AI use “all the time,” with 19 percent wanting disclosure “some of the time” and 39 percent saying “it depends.”

However, only 19 percent of agency pros are down with the “all the time” disclosure policy, with 23 percent saying “some of the time” and 36 percent indicating that “it depends.”

And while AI is seen as a big help, survey respondents agreed that it can’t do the whole job. 95 percent said they have to edit text generated by AI, with 61 percent adding that they “have to make edits to most of the text.”

MZ GROUP PILOTS HORIZON SPAC DEAL

MZ Group handled Horizon Aircraft, which is developing one of the world’s first hybrid electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, as it completed the merger with Pono Capital Three SPAC on Jan. 12.



CEO Brandon Robinson said the evolution to a publicly traded company will “serve as a catalyst to accelerate our growth by providing the resources to continue the development and testing of our practical, real world use hybrid eVTOL, the Cavorite X7.”

The Cavorite X7 prototype takes off vertically but once airborne its wing system reverts to the configuration of a conventional plane.

MZ Group Shannon Devine and Rory Rumore represent Horizon.

ON THE MOVE

FleishmanHillard names **Hugh Taggart** CEO of its UK operations, effective Feb. 21. Taggart comes to the agency from Edelman, where he most recently served as UK CEO. He previously served as global chair of issues & crisis and led Edelman’s EMEA corporate affairs practice. “In addition to his business acumen, Hugh brings a wealth of experience leading integrated teams and advising CEOs and other leaders on a range of business-critical matters,” said FleishmanHillard president and CEO John Saunders.



Hugh Taggart

KemperSports brings back agency veteran **B.R. Koehnemann** as director of corporate communications for KemperSports and KemperSports LIVE. Koehnemann most recently served as director at Buffalo Groupe. From 2006-2019, he held a variety of roles at the KemperSports. In his new position, Koehnemann will be responsible for leading all internal and external communications strategies and tactics for KemperSports and its portfolio of properties.

M&C Saatchi Sport & Entertainment North America promotes **Vicki Scarfone** to SVP, media relations. Scarfone was most recently a VP at the firm. Over the past year, she has led the development of M&C Saatchi Impact, a proprietary MR impact measurement tool the agency will launch this year. In her new role, Scarfone will oversee the agency’s profile and thought leadership strategy in addition to serving as strategic lead for clients.

MEDIA MANEUVERS

Los Angeles Times editor **Kevin Merida** exits. Merida was named executive editor at the Times in May 2021 after stints as EVP and editor-in-chief at ESPN and managing editor at the *Washington Post*.

According to the *New York Times*, Patrick Soon-Shiong, who bought the LA Times in 2018, said in a note that he and Merida “mutually agreed” that Merida should depart. According to the NY Times report, Merida and the Soon-Shiong family have been at loggerheads over such issues as editorial decisions and business priorities.



Kevin Merida

News Corp brings on **Arthur Bochner**, who most recently served as VP, strategic communications at the Walt Disney Company, as chief communications officer and EVP following the retirement later this year of Jim Kennedy, who has been with News Corp for over a decade. Kennedy’s decision to retire was announced last October. Bochner will begin at News Corp this month, working with Kennedy and his team during the transition.

Hearst Magazines names **Lindsay Horrigan** SVP, consumer growth officer, a new position at the company. Horrigan joins Hearst from Wayfair, where she served as chief marketing officer of Perigold, Wayfair’s luxury home decor marketplace, and Birch Lane, a specialty brand. Before that, she was global head of consumer marketing and general manager of subscriptions at Bloomberg Media.

COMMENTARY

[The Wall Street Journal](#) has declared the environmental, social and governance term dead due to investor backlash, political pressure and legal threats.



But as William Shakespeare noted: "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Savvy PR people are rebranding ESG as "responsible business," or lowering the volume on their social impact activity.

Daryl Brewster, who heads Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose, told the WSJ: "You can be anti-ESG. It's hard to be anti-responsibility."

Long live ESG, whatever it is called.

J Street axes confab... J Street, the top liberal Jewish advocacy group, has postponed its 2024 convention that was set for Washington from April 6 to 9 due to the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

It will be missed. The organization's events generally are newsmakers.

At J Street's December 2022 convention, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken told of US willingness to work with the incoming ultra-conservative Israeli government of prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

That's not working out well these days. Israel's rampage in Gaza has strained its ties with the Biden Administration.

That convention featured remarks from Palestinian prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh. On Jan. 4, he warned that restrictions imposed by Israel on the West Bank are driving the occupied territory to "the edge of the edge."

Vermont's then-incoming Senator Peter Welch urged pro-Israel activists to push back against right-wingers.

These days Welch is pushing back at the US government for transferring artillery ammunition to Israel without Congressional approval.

J Street on Jan. 8 called on the Biden administration to pressure the Netanyahu government to increase the humanitarian aid to Gaza and to restore power, water and fuel supplies to civilian infrastructure.

It applauded the Biden White House's rejection of calls by members of Netanyahu's administration for the mass resettlement of civilians from the Gaza Strip.

J Street's 2024 confab was to be themed "Lighting the Way."

One hopes there is still optimism and light available in 2025 when J Street's next conference is set to take place.

Playing his personal stay out of jail card... Donald Trump argues in favor of presidential immunity because without it, he said: "Every president would always be thinking, with every move made, whether or not there would be a criminal prosecution after leaving office."

His line of thinking would conveniently cover any president who orders his cultish followers to march on the Capitol and fight like hell to prevent the peaceful transfer of power in

order to keep him or her in office.

Trump warned that there would be "bedlam" in the US, if he is prevented from running for another term.

Bedlam is an archaic term for a mental institution. It is derived from London's Bethlem Royal Hospital, which opened its doors in 1247.

Trump's recent ravings about Biden trampling on the Constitution, his ability to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the Civil War, and recasting the violent mob of Jan. 6 insurrectionists as hostages and martyrs shows how unhinged the former president truly is.

On his next visit to New York, maybe Trump should swing by Bellevue Hospital, America's version of Bethlem Royal.

When I have nothing to say... The International Bottled Water Association rushed out [a statement on Jan. 8 to respond to a report](#) that bottled water is loaded with nano-plastics and microplastics that are tiny enough to enter the drinker's bloodstream. Your body as a toxic waste dump?

The study by Columbia University researchers, which was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, [found an average of 240K tiny particles of plastics in a typical liter of bottled water](#).

IBWA fired off its statement on Jan. 8 to say that since it had very limited notice and time to review the damaging survey, it could not offer a detailed response to it.

Yet, the group noted a lack of scientific consensus on the potential health impacts of nano- and microplastic particles, claiming that "media reports about these particles" serve to "unnecessarily scare consumers."

IBWA should have held its fire until it had fully analyzed the Columbia study before issuing a response to it.

IBWA members include Nestle, Culligan, Publix, Crystal Clear, Polar Beverages, 3M Purification, Misty Mountain, Polymer Solutions International and Lifespan Spring Water.

Let the tap water flow.

Here we go again... Mukhtar Babayev, a 20-year veteran of Azerbaijan's state oil company, will preside over COP29, which is slated for Nov. 11-24 in Baku. He has been Azerbaijan's ecology minister since 2018.

The Azerbaijan session comes on the heels of the 2023 session in Dubai, which was led by Sultan al-Jaber, the head of the United Arab Emirates national oil company.

Successive COP sessions run by energy executives is one way to kill the credibility of the climate change meetings, especially among young activists.

Oil and gas revenues account for 90 percent of Azerbaijan's revenues, which financed its victorious skirmish with neighboring Armenia. The chances of meaningful action at COP29 on the global warming front are nil.

Meanwhile, The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released a report Jan. 9 that reported 28 climate disasters cost the nation \$92.9B in 2023, which ranks No. 1 in billion-dollar climate and extreme weather disasters.

Time is running out for global action on climate change.

—Kevin McCauley