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SINGAPORE SEEKS PR FOR TRAVEL RESTART

Singapore Tourism Board is looking for a firm to develop a marketing communications campaign designed to increase the number of visitors from the US and Canada as the nation-state gradually reopens its borders to international short-term travelers.



As the global travel market recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, STB is interested in targeting early career (aged 25 to 34) and established career (40 to 49) travellers who are expected to be among the first groups to resume leisure travel in 2021.

STB wants a PR firm to engage media actively & effectively, provide ongoing strategic & creative counsel, lead activations/events/campaigns, attend meetings, assist in managing any crisis that might arise, work closely with other agencies and apply the Singapore's Passion Made Possible" brand in its work.

The contract is for one year beginning April 16 with an option to renew for another two years.

An optional video conference briefing is slated for Jan. 27 at 10 am New York time. STB highly recommends that interested firms attend that session. They must contact Gina Ng (Gina_Ng@stb.gov.sg) by 12 PM on Jan. 26 to register and receive dial-in details.

To see the RFP and all subsidiary documents, [click here](#).

BCW HIRES EDELMAN'S LUCKY

BCW has hired Kristena Lucky as executive vice president, brand solutions practice lead, North America. Lucky joins BCW from Edelman, where she most recently served as executive vice president, brand strategist, for the U.S. brand practice. Before that, she was executive vice president, head of brand for Edelman's southwest region.



Kristena Lucky

At BCW, Lucky is responsible for leading and growing the practice across North America. "Kristena has spent her entire career developing integrated, cross-functional programs for clients that ignite growth by moving people from awareness to action, setting the stage for sales growth and long-term loyalty," said Chris Foster, BCW president, North America Chris Foster.

OMC PRESSED TO COMBAT HATE SPEECH

A shareholder resolution slated for Omnicom's June annual meeting calls for it to commission a third-party report to determine whether its advertising policies contribute to violations of civil or human rights.

Omnicom manages nearly \$40B in client spending.

Sponsored by the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the resolution notes widespread concern that platforms such as Google and Facebook "may be failing to protect civil and human rights by supporting government censorship, facilitating white supremacist activity and enabling voter suppression."

Omnicom is a member of Facebook's client council, which advises on issues such as content moderation.

NCF says inadvertent promotion of harmful content by advertisers threatens user safety and brand value. It cites [a report that 70 percent](#) of millennials and Gen Xers "will not like, recommend, or purchase a brand whose ads appear next to offensive, hateful or derogatory content."

NCF is part of Open MIC (Open Media and Information Companies Initiative), which works with investors to promote openness, equity, privacy and diversity in the media economy. Open MIC says the Omnicom resolution and a similar one at Home Depot are the first to express concerns about reputational risk connected to advertising on social media platforms.



PRINCE CHARLES' PR MAN TO EDELMAN

Julian Payne, communications secretary for Prince Charles and wife Camilla, for the past five years is joining Edelman as chair of its EMEA corporate affairs group.

He has handled the public images of the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall in the UK and globally including through charities such as the Prince's Trust and Prince's Foundation.

Before signing on at the royal household, Payne was VP-global PR and corporate relations at Burberry and director of communications at the BBC.

He also did stints at Lynne Franks PR and Henry's House PR boutique, where he counseled clients such as Virgin Media and ITV.

Ed Williams, president/CEO of Edelman EMEA, called Payne a leader and communicator of the highest caliber.



Julian Payne

MERCURY WORKING HAMPTONS NIMBY FIGHT

Billionaire Ron Lauder and trend-spotter Faith Popcorn have signed on to fight [the burial of a power line](#) 30 feet under Wainscott Beach in Long Island's Hamptons.



Ron Lauder

The line is to transmit electricity from the Deepwater wind farm 35 miles off Montauk Point to power the homes of 70K Long Islanders.

Construction of the \$2B project will commence next year and finish in 2023.

The Citizens for the Preservation of Wainscott contends the power cable will "forever alter our sole, undivided community beach."

The Citizens, which has hired Mercury Public Affairs, are pushing

for alternative sites (e.g., Amagansett) that "would have less impact on an iconic beach." The group wants to secede from the Town of East Hampton, saying an incorporated Wainscott would have a better say about its future.

Michael McKeon, Mercury partner, handles the Citizens' push to incorporate. The former communications director for NY Gov. George Pataki and executive director of Republicans for Governor Andrew Cuomo handles crisis, media relations and PA campaigns at Mercury.

Citizens has shelled out \$307K for Mercury's services, according to its tax filing.

Omnicom owns Mercury.

BREAUX, LOTT LOBBY FOR TIKTOK

Former US Senators Trent Lott and John Breaux have signed on to represent TikTok, the social media platform that is owned by China's ByteDance. Their firm, Crossroads Strategies, counsels TikTok on discussions surrounding Internet technology and learning-enabled content platforms.

President Trump wanted to shut down TikTok on security grounds, unless ByteDance sold it to an American company.

After a bid from Microsoft failed, Oracle and Walmart in September announced that Trump tentatively approved a deal in which they would take a 20 percent stake in the newly formed TikTok Global, which would provide services in the US and most of the rest of the world.

That agreement awaits final approval by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the US.

The Biden administration will decide the fate of the deal.

MASTERCARD'S ELLIOTT HEADS TO MOODY'S

Christine Elliott, most recently executive VP, worldwide communications at Mastercard, has joined Moody's Corp.

As managing director, global head of communications and branding, she will be responsible for corporate and internal communications, media outreach, digital and social media content.

Elliott was also chief communications officer at S&P Global and American Express Global Business Travel.

"Christine's deep experience will be a strong asset as we advance our global communication vision and strategy," said David Platt, Moody's chief strategy officer.



Christine Elliott

GOOGLE, FACEBOOK SINK NEWSPAPERS

A continuing concentration of advertising on platforms like Google and Facebook is the primary reason for the newspaper industry's economic collapse, [according to a new report](#) by the American Economic Liberties Project.

The organization's "The Courage To Learn" report provides an overview of how antimonopoly laws and antitrust policies contribute to what the authors refer to as a "corporate concentration crisis" in the U.S.

Specifically, the report details what effects under-enforced economic competition policies have had on the news publishing industry, as well as how Google and Facebook were allowed to amass power by essentially monopolizing the online advertising market and siphoning away the revenues that once flowed primarily to newspapers.

Once America's media landscape began shifting online, the report says, ads were increasingly bought and sold in an automated third-party market controlled by Big Tech, which severed the relationship between publisher and customer and allowed entities such as Google and Facebook to take an increasingly larger share of every ad dollar spent.

The result? Google and Facebook are now two of the largest corporations in the world, effectively controlling 77 percent of local newspaper advertising revenue. Meanwhile, advertising revenue for the U.S. newspaper industry, which peaked at about \$50 billion in 2005, has since been in a free fall, standing at an estimated \$14 billion in 2018.

The report also blamed newspapers' demise on an increase of buyouts by predatory investment companies, strip-mining local news ecosystems of their remaining assets and giving rise to "news deserts," or communities in the U.S. without access to a local paper.

The American Economic Liberties Project, which launched last year, is an organization dedicated to addressing the increased concentration of corporate and economic power in the United States.

BALTIMORE CO. SEEKS POT PREVENTION PR

The Baltimore County Department of Health is seeking proposals from professional marketing and/or advertising agencies that can create a social media marketing and advertising program to raise awareness of marijuana use and influence behavior regarding its related consequences among target audiences, which includes Baltimore County's youth and young adults (ages 12-25) as well as parents and mentors.

Scope of work includes developing messages; writing and design of campaign elements and expanding on creative concepts; production of campaign materials; and developing a media plan to reach target audiences.

Budget for the work is set at \$24,999.

Proposals are due by 3 p.m. (EST) on Feb. 12 and should be emailed to: bid@baltimorecountymd.gov.

The RFP number (P-283) should be referenced in the email's subject line.

Questions should be directed to staff buyer Christine Carpenter, ccarpenter@baltimorecountymd.gov, by Feb. 3.

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



TAKING TRUMP OFF TWITTER ISN'T ENOUGH

One decisive consequence of the Jan. 6 storming of the US Capitol by Trump supporters was the permanent suspension of the @realDonaldTrump account on Twitter “due to the



Jennifer Scott

risk of further incitement of violence” (Twitter Blog, Jan. 8, 2021), as well as the temporary suspension of his social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube among others.

Communications professionals know the power of words, especially words amplified by influential people on platforms with massive reach. We understand that checks and balances are at the heart of deploying words in responsible and accountable ways. We have our own code of ethics. We work with journalists who have their own code of ethics. Common among them is a commitment to honesty, accuracy, and truth.

Despite this ethical foundation, we are scrambling to respond ethically to the meteoric rise of social media as a communications platform. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook have transformed from vehicles used by friends and family to keep in touch, to algorithmically driven marketing machines.

[A 2018 MIT study of Twitter](#) (MIT News, March 8, 2018) found that false stories are 70 percent more likely to be retweeted (by people, not bots) than true stories, and that it takes true stories six times longer than false stories to reach the same number of people. Furthermore, out of all news categories, political falsehoods traveled faster and further.

On social media platforms, the virality of misinformation is also enhanced by the selective targeting of consumers using algorithms. These function to feed the most “relevant” content (including PR and advertising) to users based on their interests (harvested from their search history). This is one thing if I am searching for a new vacuum cleaner and targeted ads appear on my feed. But it’s another when the content being pushed to me includes misinformation that has been selected to appeal to my political and ideological convictions.

It is becoming clear how human nature can combine with the business model of social media to allow users to inhabit increasingly partisan online worlds, reinforced by misinformation, where views are radicalized rather than tempered. This is an environment ripe for those who would sow discord and extremism. Which is why suspending the president from social media was like extinguishing a match without doing much to drain away the giant pool of gasoline.

Communicators need to recognize this situation for what it is and to reassess how we use social media on behalf of our organizations and clients. We need to look carefully at the ways in which personal data are being harvested and used for selective targeting of advertising or PR. We need to take a fresh look at the stories we tell to check that we are not inadvertently pandering to ideological confirmation bias. And we need to more diligently examine situations where we might be tempted to prioritize “reach” over accuracy or “engagement” over balanced discourse. In this way, we can do our part to dilute that pool of gasoline and restore social media as a vibrant, diverse, and healthy communications environment.

Jennifer Scott is clinical assistant professor, PR and corporate communications at New York University’s School of Professional Studies. She was previously managing director, thought leadership at Ogilvy.

FIVE TAKEAWAYS FROM PSAKI’S FIRST DAY

Within moments of taking the podium in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room—and mere hours into the Biden administration—White House press secretary Jen Psaki signaled to the media and the world that change had come to the White House.

The role of White House press secretary is the world’s toughest public relations job. Staying “on message” is very difficult, given the ability of unfolding events to force unforeseen pivots.

It’s incumbent on the press secretary and her team to diligently respond to the barrage of media inquiries so that readers and viewers of news outlets big and small can better understand the administration’s work.

Having served as a government press secretary for several years—albeit nowhere near the White House—makes assessing the potential of a press secretary a little easier, though certainly not foolproof.

In a single briefing, Psaki was able to make clear that President Biden would strive for transparency and that truth would be the standard, even if doing so would mean more instances of “I’ll research that and get back to you.”

It’s a refreshing contrast after a string of press secretaries who viewed their role as conveying their boss’ narrative—even when that narrative clearly contradicted the facts—treating journalists as enemies of the people or seeking to use favoritism with journalists to strategic ends.

Here are five things that Psaki did that earned the confidence of those in the room and viewers around the globe.

The truth matters. No press secretary or PR professional can ever achieve success in their job by lying. Yes, their job is to present the facts that support the administration’s agenda and to deflect on inquiries that could harm public opinion, but these efforts must always be grounded in fact.

Do as I do, not just as I say. By wearing two masks (including an N95), Psaki demonstrated her commitment to the policy she was announcing that day—the mask mandate in federal buildings and elsewhere—and made a broader statement through her actions about this administration.

Be prepared. When you’re thoroughly prepared for press conferences and media availabilities, it shows. Psaki was prepared to answer most questions, often referring to a briefing book marked up with notes.

Consistency is key. Psaki was clear that the daily briefing has returned—emphasis on daily. In media relations, a best practice is to always respect the journalist’s deadline, and press secretaries must strike a balance between providing basic details and showing their cards for all to see. Providing regular access to information is important.

Being polite never hurts. Psaki gets points for calling on journalists by name and for being even-handed: foreign reporters were called on as well as American journalists and outlets were not discriminated on based on the political leanings of their commentary.

Time will tell how Jen Psaki performs as White House press secretary, but the early indicators are very strong.

David A. Ball is the president and founder of Ball Consulting Group, LLC, a strategic communications firm in the Boston area. He began his PR career in the administration of former Massachusetts Governor Bill Weld.



David Ball

GUYANA ISSUES TOURISM MARKETING RFP

The Co-operative Republic of Guyana is seeking proposals from agencies that can plan and execute a multi-faceted digital marketing strategy that promotes the South American country's tourism economy to target audiences.



Scope of the work includes social media management, devising social media advertising campaigns and developing marketing strategies for digital media placement, online reputation management, content creation and providing analytical reports.

Terms of the contract run from April 2021 to March 2022.

Proposals are due by 09:00 a.m. (AST) on February 2 and should be sent to: Chairman of National Procurement and Tender Administration; National Procurement and Tender Administration; Ministry of Finance; Main & Urquhart Streets; Georgetown, Guyana

Questions should be directed to Guyana Tourism Authority senior marketing officer of Nicola Balram, nicola@guyana-tourism.com, and Guyana Tourism Authority senior manager Annarie Seecharan, annarie@guyanaturism.com, by 12 p.m. (AST) on January 28.

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

OFFICE DEPOT NIXES STAPLES' \$2B BID

[Kekst CNC](#) is advising Office Depot as it rejects a \$2.1B unsolicited offer from Staples' owner Sycamore Partners and proposes an alternative plan to merge the companies' retail and consumer-facing e-commerce businesses "under the right set of circumstances and on mutually acceptable terms."

Boca Raton-based ODP is in the process of selling its CompCom IT services and is building a B2B growth strategy, according to chairman Joseph Vassalluzzo's letter to Sycamore managing director Stefan Kaluzny.

Vassalluzzo said ODP is not willing to engage in a long, drawn-out process and expensive regulatory review with no guarantee of success unless Staples is willing to "bear this risk through a customary 'hell or high water' provision."

Jeremy Fielding and Ruth Pachman of Kekst CNC handle ODP. [Joele Frank](#), [Wilkinson](#), [Brimmer Katcher](#) represents Sycamore.

RESOLUTE HIRES BIDEN/HARRIS' ALVILLAR

Raul Alvillar, who was New Mexico state director for the Biden/Harris 2020 campaign, is joining Resolute Public Affairs as an executive VP.



Raul Alvillar

Alvillar previously served as national political director for the Democratic National Committee. He has also been the senior advisor for HUD's public engagement office, associate director of the office of public engagement in the Obama White House and western regional political director for Obama's 2008 campaign.

While at the White House, he helped manage the rollout of the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy as interim LGBT liaison.

Based in New Mexico, Alvillar will be tasked with raising the agency's profile in the southwest. He will also spend time working from Washington.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Aziza Work Group is named PR agency of record for the relaunch of **Ebony** and **Jet** magazines. Aziza will guide publicity for the brands as well as strategizing the relaunch process. The agency is also working on raising awareness of Michele Ghee, the new CEO of 1145 Holdings, which includes all assets related to Ebony and Jet. Ebony, founded in 1945, put out its last issue in Spring 2019. Jet started publication in 1951, and transitioned to a print-only platform in 2014. Aziza principal Michelle Watts says that the agency's work for the publications will focus on finding creative ways to implement that history into their current mission, which Ghee says is to "ensure there is a safe space for Black journalism to thrive."



Marino adds **BetterNOI**, a software-as-a-service platform focused on the residential real industry, to its roster of real estate and property technology accounts. Marino will work with BetterNOI's team to boost the company's profile and position it as the go-to choice for property owners and managers of multifamily units. BetterNOI lets them bring their entire leasing process onto one platform.

RooneyPartners is now working with **SMBC Americas**, the **Global Association of Risk Professionals** and **Ascensus**. The agency will provide PR support and thought leadership for SMBC Americas and for SMBC Nikko, its broker-dealer unit. RooneyPartners will drive brand awareness for GARP through media relations, thought leadership and digital promotion. The media relations services of RooneyPartners will be employed to advance the Ascensus brand and support the company's business development goals.

The Pollack Group has been chosen as U.S. communications agency partner for **Openpay**, an Australia-based company that provides Buy Now, Pay Later solutions for consumers and businesses. The agency will work to establish Openpay as a leader in the BNPL through a strategic media relations program and thought leadership platform. Openpay's technology allows payments for a purchase to be spread out over a period of one to 24 months.

Zapwater Communications and **Studio Jungla** are working together as agencies of record in the U.S. and Canadian markets for **Grupo Xcaret**, a sustainable tourism brand with assets across Mexico ranging from hotels, resorts and restaurants to eco-adventure parks, tours and transportation. The agencies will partner with Mexican firm Alchemia Communications Group to provide strategic communications for the brand. Alchemia leads the public relations and marketing services for Grupo Xcaret within Mexico while in the U.S., Zapwater will manage public relations and influencer relations, and Studio Jungla will initiate travel industry trade communications.

Magrino picks up agency of record status with **Hu Chocolate**, which offers a line of organic, vegan products. The agency will work on creative programming and brand awareness development for the brand in the U.S. market through integrated public relations strategies and marketing campaigns.



JOELE FRANK, SVB TOP MERGERMARKET LIST

Joel Frank Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher and Sard Verbinen topped the 2020 Mergermarket global rankings of PR firms handling M&A transactions.

Joel Frank was the #1 PR advisor when measured by deal value, working transactions with a total value of close to \$376 million. Sard Verbinen, which served as advisor on 221 deals, took the top spot for number of deals handled.

Overall, the global M&A market cooled considerably last year. Four out of the top five firms in both the deal value and deal count rankings saw a decline from 2019. The exceptions were Finsbury Glover Hering, which showed a 33.8 percent rise in deal value to take the #4 spot, and Brunswick Group, which saw its deal count go from 165 in 2019 to 180 last year, placing second in that category.

The top five in the global deal value list also included Sard Verbinen (#2), Brunswick Group (#3) and Kekst CNC (#5). When measured by global deal count, Finsbury Glover Hering (#3), Joel Frank (#4) and Kekst CNC (#5) scored top rankings.

The U.S. lists were headed by Sard Verbinen, with Joel Frank coming in second on both.

CORPUS CHRISTI SEEKS PR FOR AIRPORT

Corpus Christi is looking for a firm to design a “turn-key marketing strategy and campaign” to reduce “leakage” at its airport. Leakage refers to local travelers who drive to larger, regional airports to get cheaper fares and non-stop flights, the RFP says.



In 2019, leakage to San Antonio and Houston airports accounted for 45 percent of the originating traffic in those markets. Corpus Christi International Airport wants to reduce leakage by about 20 percent of the 2019 levels.

The hired firm will create digital ads and a landing page with marketing messages to cut leakage. It also will develop display ads on high-traffic sites, handle location-based mobile advertising and conduct remarketing via Facebook.

The campaign will kick off in March.

Responses are due Feb. 2. They go to: Minerva Alvarado; City of Corpus Christi—Contracts and Procurement; 1201 Leopard St.—First Floor; Corpus Christi, TX 78401

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

W2O BOLSTERS EXECUTIVE RANKS

W2O has appointed Jo Ann Saitta, Marcos Mendell and Larry Mickelberg to three newly created executive positions. The new positions are intended to complement the agency’s healthcare technology business, which was formed following W2O’s acquisition of Swoop and IPM.ai.

As global chief digital officer, Saitta will lead the development of W2O’s omnichannel performance marketing capabilities. She comes to W2O after serving as global chief digital officer at Omnicom Health Group.

Mendell joins W2O as executive VP, health platform innovation. He was previously global lead, commercial and omnichannel solutions at Syneos Health.

Mickelberg is coming on board as group president, technology and engagement. He will develop approaches to digitize the commercial vision and strategy for W2O’s creative business, 21GRAMS.

MOVEON NEEDS PR PARTNER

Liberal advocacy group MoveOn is looking for an agency to provide public relations support and media relations services.

The progressive public policy organization seeks a partner with experience working with advocacy, political or non-profit organizations.



Scope of work includes providing day-to-day support of media relations work; offering input on MoveOn’s campaign planning; aiding in the development of relationships with key media; helping raise awareness of MoveOn’s brand among key audiences; creating messaging and producing supporting content for media relations work; working with MoveOn’s team to build equitable public relations practices; and lending support to MoveOn’s press and communications team.

The project is anticipated to begin on April 1 and comes with a maximum budget of \$15,000 per month.

Proposals are due by Thursday, February 4 and should be submitted to proposals@moveon.org with “MoveOn Public Relations Firm” in the subject line.

[View the RFP here](#).

ALEXANDRIA GROUP ENROLLS AT AU IRAQ

Alexandria Group International is helping American University of Iraq Baghdad contact US government officials, media and opinion-shapers to advance its mission of developing a diverse, tolerant, free and peaceful nation.

The private and non-profit entity aims to educate young Iraqis so they can create a modern nation equipped to handle the challenges of the 21st century.

AGI’s one-year contract with AUIB is worth \$252K.

Managing partner Marshall Harris handles the effort. The US foreign service veteran made news in 1993 when he resigned as special assistant to secretary of state Jim Baker to protest US inaction in Bosnia.

He went on to launch Balkan Action Council, with AGI’s John Menzies, to advocate for American intervention to stop the genocide in Bosnia by Serbia.

Harris also was VP at Freedom House and an advisor to former Senate majority leader Bob Dole.



PR MUSEUM FOCUSES ON BLACK PR HISTORY

The Museum of Public Relations will host a Feb. 9 virtual event focused on the contributions of Black professionals to the field of PR. The sixth annual “Celebrating Black PR History” event is being sponsored by Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, CommPro.biz and Muck Rack.

Moderated by Diversity Action Alliance executive director Carmella Glover, the event will feature a keynote address from APCO senior advisor for equity and justice Charlene Wheelless. Other speakers include are Elon University associate professor, strategic communication Denise Hill; chair of Elon’s school of communications Rochelle Ford; Burson Cohn & Wolfe brand strategist Sabrina Browne; and Troy Blackwell, Jr., a candidate for New York City Council.

The event gets underway at 6 p.m. For more information, or to register, [click here](#).

COMMENTARY



America “must reject the culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured,” and it is the duty of all of us to “defend the truth and defeat the lies,” said president Joe Biden in his powerful inauguration speech.

The president has his work cut out. He succeeded the liar-in-chief who amassed 30,573 false and misleading claims during his four years in office.

Biden will have to take on the Republican Sedition Caucus, the 147 Members of Congress, who voted to overturn the presidential election.

Nicole Malliotakis, who represents Staten Island and a slice of Brooklyn in which I live, is a charter member of that alternate reality-loving Caucus.

She responded to my note objecting to her vote against certification by claiming there was “an unprecedented number of claims of electoral fraud” that “undermine faith in our election system.”

That’s bunk. Those claims came from Donald Trump, the ringmaster of the voter fraud circus and his supporters eager to suppress the vote.

In the Jan. 17 *New York Times Magazine*, Yale professor Timothy Snyder wrote: “Members of Congress who sustained the president’s lie, despite the available and unambiguous evidence, betrayed their constitutional mission.”

He warned that an elected institution that opposes elections is inviting its own overthrow.

Biden promised that he will always “level” with the American people and that “democracy and hope, truth and justice” won’t die on his watch.

The nation should rally around the president’s mission, because as Snyder wrote: “Post-truth is pre-fascism.”

Pack sent packing... Joe Biden did not waste any time getting rid of political hack Michael Pack from the CEO post of the US Agency for Global Media.

Much damage has already been done.

USAG is the broadcasting arm of the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Middle East Broadcasting Network, Radio Free Asia and Radio, and TV Marti (Cuba).

Pack, conservative filmmaker (“Created Equal: Clarence Thomas in His Own Words”), made two films with Steve Bannon, the disgraced and now pardoned strategist of former president Donald Trump.

Pack resigned Jan. 21 after being informed that Team Biden wanted to remove him. The president appointed Kelu Chao, an almost 40-year veteran of the VOA, acting CEO.

Biden also removed Bob Reilly as VOA director and Elizabeth Robbins as deputy director.

Reilly did not exactly cover himself with glory when he reassigned VOA reporter Patsy Widakusawara on Jan. 11 for asking ex-secretary of state Mike Pompeo, “What are you doing to repair the US reputation around the world?”

He declared the reporter was “out of order” for posing the

question.

By getting rid of Pack and Reilly, Biden ensures that the VOA will live up to its mandate to supply “accurate, objective, and comprehensive” programming that does not stand for any single segment of American society.

Hot off the presses and tossed right into the trash can goes the White House’s “1776 Report,” which was created by Team Trump “to combat the “dispositive rebuttal of reckless ‘re-education’ attempts that seek to reframe American history around the idea that the US is not an exceptional country but an evil one.”

The Report, which equates the progressive movement with fascism, is not worth the 41 pages that it is written on.

It “skillfully weaves together myths, distortions, deliberate silences and both blatant and subtle misreading of evidence to create a narrative and an argument that few respectable professional historians, even across a wide interpretive spectrum, would consider plausible, never mind convincing,” James Grossman, executive director of the American Historical Assn. told the *New York Times*.

There is one part of the Report that resonates in the aftermath of the storming of the Capitol by a Trump-loving mob.

That is delivered by Abraham Lincoln, who warned about mob violence during his 1838 Lyceum Address in Springfield, IL.

He said: “Whenever the vicious portion of [our] population shall be permitted to gather in bands of hundreds and thousands, and burn churches, ravage and rob provision stores, throw printing-presses into rivers, shoot editors, and hang and burn obnoxious persons at pleasure and with impunity, depend upon it, this government cannot last.”

The 16th president could have been speaking about the 45th who tried to pull down American democracy by overturning one of the freest elections in US history.

TC Energy, developer of the Keystone XL pipeline, on Jan. 17 heaved a desperate Hail Mary PR pass downfield in the hopes of improving the prospects of the controversial project.

The pass fell incomplete.

Days before Joe Biden, who pledged to kill the pipeline, was to be sworn in as president, TC promised Keystone would be “the first pipeline powered by renewable energy.”

The Canadian company claimed the pipeline would “achieve net zero emissions” once it was placed into service in 2023. TC would hit the emissions goal by purchasing renewable energy from electricity providers.

Environmental groups have been battling and raising money by lining up against Keystone since the project was announced in 2008.

They object to transporting 830K barrels of dirty tar sands oil daily from Canada to Texas refineries for shipment overseas. The EPA says tar sands emit 17 percent more carbon into the atmosphere than other types of crude.

TC Energy should have made the renewable energy project ten years ago to incorporate it into the overall debate about the project. —Kevin McCauley