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Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's

The Inside News of PR & Marketing Communications



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## H+K WORKS TO BOLSTER WHO'S CREDIBILITY

Hill+Knowlton Strategies is working with the World Health Organization to make certain its science and public health messaging is credible in order to ensure there is trust in the Switzerland-based group's advice and that its guidance is followed.



The firm acknowledges there have been criticisms and assertions leveled against the WHO and media coverage that could undermine it as a trusted and critical information source on global health issues.

For instance, President Trump on July 6 formally notified it that the US intends to withdraw from the group because he believes it helped China cover up the outbreak and spread of COVID-19. Joe Biden promised to withdraw the exit notice if he's elected president.

The firm began its work on May 20 focused on the areas of influencer identification, message testing and development of a campaign framework for a fee of \$135K.

The WPP unit's core team includes Nick Driver, senior VP of the data & analytics practice; John Gillooly, senior VP; Ron Hutcheson managing director & ex-president of the White House Correspondents Assn., and Joe Householder, PA specialist. AnnaMaria DeSalva, global CEO, and Sam Lythgoe, global chief business development officer, provide oversight of the WHO work on a pro-bono basis.

## EX-WH PRESS SECRETARY TO RATIONAL 360

Joe Lockhart, who was White House press secretary for Bill Clinton, is now a partner at Rational 360, which has acquired his firm, Strategic Heights.

Most recently, Lockhart was vice chairman for PA at Edelman. He also served as founding partner at Glover Park Group and executive VP at Bozell Sawyer Miller.



**Joe Lockhart**

He also did stints at the National Football League as executive VP in charge of communications, government affairs, social responsibility, and Facebook as VP-global communications.

Lockhart was assignment editor at ABC News, deputy assignment editor at CNN and foreign producer reporting on the Gulf War for Sky News.

He served as a press secretary for the presidential campaigns of Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis, an aide to Senator Paul Simon, and a senior advisor to the John Kerry campaign.

## AL COAST FLOATS MARKETING RFPs

The Coastal Alabama Partnership, a non-profit comprised of regional businesses and community leaders, has issued a series of Request for Proposals for agencies that can develop and market a brand showcasing the state's Gulf Coast.

CAP is seeking proposals from destination marketing consulting firms specializing in ecotourism. It is also seeking an experienced marketing agency to develop and execute a marketing campaign that advertises and publicizes the newly-created brand in an effort to showcase Alabama's Gulf Coast and its ecotourism opportunities. That agency will also be invited to participate in the branding process.



Deadline for proposals is 4:00 p.m. (CST) on Monday, July 27. Proposals should be mailed to: Coastal Alabama Partnership; P.O. Box 881; Mobile, AL 36602

Proposals should additionally be submitted via email to [Andrew@coastalalabama.org](mailto:Andrew@coastalalabama.org).

Bidding agencies should send three hard copies of their proposals (all containing original signatures) in an envelope labeled "Proposal for Ecotourism Marketing."

Questions should be directed to Andrew Levert, VP policy and projects, 251/438-8822 or [andrew@coastalalabama.org](mailto:andrew@coastalalabama.org).

[Download the Ecotourism Consulting & Branding RFP \(PDF\).](#)

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

## FINSBURY'S ABRAHAMS JOINS SV&C

Michael Abrahams, a 20-year veteran of WPP's Finsbury, has joined Sard Verbinnen & Co as head of its employee and transformation communications practice. He will work with SV&C clients on transactions, restructurings, crisis, litigation, activism and corporate reputation matters.



**Michael Abrahams**

Abrahams will also counsel clients on remote working, workplace return plans, diversity, equity and inclusion.

As Finsbury partner, Abrahams founded and led its employee & change communications practice.

Earlier, he was interim global communications chief for Netherlands-based Royal Ahold, parent company of Giant Food, Stop & Shop, Peapod and Albert Heijn.

Abrahams also did a seven-year stint in the communications & PA department of National Public Radio.

## **MERGERMARKET NAMES FINSBURY DEAL KING**

Finsbury Hering Schuppener GPG took the top spot both in the U.S. and globally, when measured by deal value, in Mergermarket's rankings of PR advisors for the first half of 2020. When measured by deal count, Sard Verbinen was the leader, even though it recorded a drop from 126 deals in the first half of 2019 to 75 deals in the first half of 2020.

FHSG stood out as one of the few firms in the survey to have made gains over its deal-value performance from the first half of 2019, with an 8.3 percent jump globally and a 14.9 percent increase in the U.S. But even FHSG was not immune from the deal-count loss that hit every firm in the global and U.S. top 10, with the exception of #9 BackBay Communications.

Following FHSG on the global deal-value list were #2 Joele Frank Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher, #3 Brunswick Group, #4 Sard Verbinen and #5 Kekst CNC. In the U.S., FHSG was joined in the top five by Sard Verbinen, Brunswick Group, Joele Frank Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher and Kekst CNC.

In terms of global deal count, SVB was ahead of #2 Kekst CNC, #3 Brunswick Group, #4 FHSG and #5 Joele Frank. In the U.S., Kekst CNC took the #2 spot, followed by Joele Frank, FHSG and Brunswick Group.

## **MUTUAL OF OMAHA REVAMPS LOGO**

Mutual of Omaha is removing the Native American imagery from its corporate logo as a part of a drive to address issues of racial equity and social justice.



“We believe the decision to retire our corporate symbol is the right thing to do and is consistent with our values and our desire to help overcome racial bias and stereotypes,” said Mutual of Omaha chairman and CEO James Blackledge. “We feel strongly our logo should reflect who we are as a company and our commitment to positive change.”

The company says that it has earmarked \$1 million in additional funding for community-based initiatives and non-profit organizations committed to racial equity, inclusivity, economic equality and social justice.

Mutual of Omaha will begin transitioning away from the Indian head logo, which was adopted by the company in 1950, immediately.

## **DE BLASIO PRESS AIDE TO SKDKNICK**

Olivia Lapeyrolerie, first deputy press secretary for New York mayor Bill de Blasio, is exiting City Hall for a VP slot at Democratic PR firm SKDKnickerbocker.



**Olivia Lapeyrolerie**

She joined de Blasio's team after a stint in Ohio for the Hillary for America presidential campaign and a press job at Barack Obama's Commerce Dept.

Lapeyrolerie also worked on deBlasio's ill-fated run this year for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Her exit follows the departure of de Blasio's press secretary Freddi Goldstein.

Goldstein had a four-year run with the mayor, joining his administration from SKDKnickerbocker, which is part of Mark Penn's Stagwell Group.

## **MEDIA MANEUVERS**

**CBS Television Studios** and the **NAACP** are forming a multi-year partnership to acquire, develop and produce premium content intended to increase the visibility of Black artists. Under the partnership, CBS creative leaders will work with the NAACP to establish both a dedicated team of executives and the infrastructure necessary to support the initiative. In addition to developing content for the CBS Television Network, the partnership will also have the ability to sell programming to third-party platforms. “This partnership with CBS allows us to bring compelling and important content to a broad audience,” said NAACP president and CEO Derrick Johnson.



**Vox Media**, citing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, is shedding 72 employees, six percent of its staff. Vox publishes *New York* magazine, Recode, SB Nation and Eater, among other titles. Most of those getting pink slips had already been furloughed by the company earlier this year. According to CNBC, Vox met its revenue targets for the first two months of 2020, but the company's second-quarter earnings were 40 percent less than had been forecast, and it plans to miss its full-year target by 25 percent.

Despite competition from AppleTV, HBO Max and Disney+, **Netflix** added 10.2 million subscribers in the second quarter, beating expectations by over 20 percent. That number is more than three times the amount of subscribers the platform normally picks up in a quarter, and brings its year-to-date increase to nearly 26 million. However, Netflix projects that it will only add 2.5 million subscribers in the third quarter, down from 6.8 million in Q3 for 2019. The news comes as the company promotes chief content officer Ted Sarandos to co-CEO, serving alongside founding CEO Reed Hastings.

## **PR'S TOP PROS TALK: CRAIG MINASSIAN**

Clinton Foundation chief communications & marketing officer Craig Minassian talks about how non-profit organizations can connect with audiences in this week's “PR's Top Pros Talk” with D S Simon Media's Doug Simon.

Minassian says successful communications in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis and the increasing importance of social justice issues need to be additive, supportive and collaborative.

To be additive, he says, an organization's communications need to make a unique contribution to the discussion of the issues it works on. Being supportive extends past the message itself to encompass a concern for an organization's beneficiaries, partners, staff and all the other people affected by its work. And effective collaboration requires really listening to your partners to gain an understanding of all sides of an issue.

Minassian also says that organizations need to keep their messaging focused on their work and mission—and not on themselves.

All of the interviews in the “[PR's Top Pros Talk](#)” series [can be seen here](#).

Interested in taking part? Contact Doug Simon at [dougs@dssimonmedia.com](mailto:dougs@dssimonmedia.com).





## **BATTLING TRAVEL'S ECONOMIC FEVER**

While there's no denying the tragic loss of life and suffering resulting from the global COVID-19 pandemic, it will be the economic repercussions that continue to plague the travel industry for some time.



**Charles Mardiks**

The travel and tourism industry has enjoyed several years of impressive growth. According to recent numbers from the World Travel and Tourism Council, last year the tourism sector grew globally to a record \$8.9 trillion of the world's combined Gross Domestic Product, up from \$8.8 trillion in 2018. This represents a contribution of 10 percent of the global GDP. A total of 330 million jobs are supported by this

industry around the world.

Early COVID-19 related headlines generally focused on passengers stranded on cruise ships and the closing of borders as well as the struggle of local businesses such as restaurants and retail. At the same time, the pandemic has knocked down many segments of the travel industry from airlines, cruise lines and hotels to attractions, museums and travel agency networks. Major travel players the likes of Hertz and LATAM Airlines have declared bankruptcy, and word on the street is there will likely be more economic casualties.

Other industries have been able to shift their operations to respond to the pandemic and changed consumer buying patterns, such as retailers and fashion companies selling masks, cosmetic and skincare companies producing hand sanitizer and restaurants and bars focusing on take-out and delivery. It's much more difficult for travel companies that are dependent on in person experiences and attract consumers from national and global markets to do so.

So, what are some of the survival tactics that we can all employ to ride this economic storm out?

At this stage, we've all likely lost business or at the very least have had clients go on hiatus. For some it might be time to consider diversifying our client portfolio beyond just travel. Now is the time to maintain contact with former clients and those on hiatus to reach out with suggestions, media and business leads, even without remuneration. It's about sustaining the relationships, so when revenue returns you'll be top of mind. It's the time to network like crazy. Amp up your LinkedIn activity and other social outreach. Tap the professional organizations that you belong to. Participate in webinars and virtual events and panel discussions to remain visible. Share relevant, current client results with others.

It's also time to help clients with strategies on how to target new local/regional markets and conceptualize "one-tank" and hyper-local vacation programs. This is also a time to laser-target past guests and visitors who are already loyal to the brand or destination. Consider developing special value-added programs to reward their loyalty and incentivize them to return sooner than later and to recommend the brand to their friends and family.

It's a great time to align with strategic partners to jointly fund campaigns that clients might not be able to afford on their own. It's also wise to research niche and geographic markets that once medium- to long-haul travel is viable might be more likely to be the first to pack their bags. For example, adventure travelers who have a passion and a higher threshold for risk might be more apt to travel once things open up

than families with young children or the mature market.

Key influencers, travel writers and travel specialists will also want to get back out there early on to show their followers, readers, viewers and clients what it's like to travel now, and that it's safe to do so. As a result, the press trip, whether group or individual, might have a bit of a resurgence. It's also smart to align with locally-based media, freelancers and/or influencers who contribute to outlets in other key markets during the period when other media are not able to travel.

While there's no telling how long the dark economic cloud will hover over the travel industry, there are bound to be a few showers and perhaps even a storm in the not too distant future. However, with a bit of tenacity, ingenuity and flexible planning that can pivot to the ever-changing nature of this pandemic, you are certain to weather this storm too.

*Charles Mardiks is founder and president of Mardiks PR.*

## **WEEDMAPS SHOPS FOR PR FIRM**

Weedmaps, a California-based tech company that connects consumers with brands and retailers in the legal cannabis economy, wants a PR firm to bolster awareness and increase its presence in the business, tech, lifestyle and cannabis media.

The company's consumer-facing platform provides information about products including online ordering, local retailers, education on cannabis and its legal status.

The PR partner will reinforce Weedmaps' role as the cannabis industry's "thought leader, educational resource and de facto operating system."

The firm must proactively pitch angles, story ideas, and have a proven ability to generate PR ideas that "create news."

A geographic presence in California is a must, and representation in New York is preferred, but not required.

Headquartered in Irvine, Weedmaps has more than 400 employees in Denver, Tucson, New York, Toronto and Barcelona.

Travis Rexroad, Weedmaps' communications director, is fielding questions about the RFP. His email address is [traxroad@weedmaps.com](mailto:traxroad@weedmaps.com).

Interested firms must declare their intent to respond to the RFP by July 24. Weedmaps expects to select a firm on Sept. 8 for the campaign slated to start Sept. 21.

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



## **ABERNATHY MACGREGOR REELS IN JAWS**

Abernathy MacGregor represents Jaws Acquisition Corp., the blank check company formed to gobble up acquisitions or to arrange mergers or other business combinations.

Launched by Barry Sternlicht, founder of Starwood Capital alternative investment firm with \$60B in hotels, real estate and oil and gas sector assets, and Joseph Dowling, CEO of Brown University's \$4B endowment fund, Jaws began trading on the New York Stock Exchange earlier this month.

Jaws, which is incorporated in the Cayman Islands, says it will not be limited to a particular industry or geographic region in its acquisitions of target companies but has ruled out pursuing real estate, lodging or energy infrastructure assets.

The stock of the Miami Beach-based company trades at \$10.97.

AbMac CEO Tom Johnson and senior VP Dan Scorpio work the Jaws business.

## DUBAI IS LOOKING FOR TRAVEL PR FIRM

Dubai's Department of Tourism is looking for a PR firm to handle media relations, communications and events in the US and Canada.



The US, which sent 116K overnight visitors to Dubai during the year ended February 2020, is the No. 7 source of travelers to Dubai. The bulk of those visitors arrived via direct flights on Emirates Airlines from New York and Los Angeles.

The RFP acknowledges that its PR partner must overcome challenges in its promotion effort.

They are hurdles concerning 1) affordable and value for money--Dubai is perceived as expensive and only offering luxury travel; 2) Authenticity—Dubai is perceived as artificial, with no culture or heritage; 3) Destination offerings—Dubai targets mainly affluent couples and offers little for family travelers; 4) Geography & safety—Dubai is still perceived as being part of the “Middle East” box and there's a lack of understanding of how safe it is.

The PR push will help raise the level of awareness of Dubai as a world class leisure destination for consumers and tackle misperceptions about affordability, authenticity and the limited range of accommodations. It also will hike Dubai's share of voice and attractiveness to American travelers as a stopover and “mono destination location.”

Canada ranks as the 18th largest source market for Dubai. For the Canadian market, “the PR firm will act in a reactive capacity when to comes to media opportunities.”

Firms interested in pitching the Dubai business must send an email by July 24 to either Qutubuddin Mulla ([q.mulla@dubaitourism.ae](mailto:q.mulla@dubaitourism.ae)), Arpita Khaarbada ([a.kharbada@dubai-tourism.ae](mailto:a.kharbada@dubai-tourism.ae)) or Anu Berwal ([anu.berwal@dubaitourism.ae](mailto:anu.berwal@dubaitourism.ae)).

Responses to the RFP are due July 31.

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

## VERIZON PUSHES STAKEHOLDER CAPITALISM

Verizon has jumped on the stakeholder capitalism bandwagon via its “Citizen Verizon” responsible business plan.

CEO Hans Vestberg said July 14 that the telecom is making a commitment to move the world forward through action and technology. “To continue being one of the world's technology leaders, we must address the economic, environmental and societal issues that are most pressing,” he said.

The goals of CV are to: 1) become carbon neutral by 2035; 2) prepare 500K people for “jobs of the future”, and 3) teach digital skills to 10M students from grades K-12 by 2030.



Vestberg announced the company would convene the inaugural “Citizen Verizon Assembly: Charging Social Change Forward,” a virtual event of

business leaders, activists and thought leaders to be streamed on Yahoo Finance July 29.

Diego Scotti, executive vice president and chief marketing officer for Verizon, said though Verizon's responsible business plan was in the works prior to COVID-19 and BLM, those crises highlighted the pressing need to act.

“People are fed up of BS, of companies selling, selling, selling,” he told *Business Insider*. Brand affinity now comes from “companies providing value that is real, with stuff that is true, and with stuff that makes a difference.”

## GODLEY NAMED GREENOUGH PRESIDENT

Greenough Communications has brought on Ben Godley, the former chief operating officer of Boston public television station and content producer WGBH, as president.

Godley was most recently the CEO and co-founder of CDP (Contributor Development Partnership), a WGBH-owned public benefit corporation that provides marketing, technology, data analytics and fundraising services to 230 public media stations as well as managing \$110M in annual donations.

He joined WGBH in 2008 as executive vice president, was named COO in 2010 and was additionally named president of business services in 2017. Prior to joining WGBH, Godley served as senior advisor and deputy national finance director with Mitt Romney's 2008 presidential campaign.



**Ben Godley**

In his newly created role, Godley will leverage his executive management and marketing experience to help support Greenough's portfolio of national clients in the healthcare, life sciences, technology, professional services, consumer and non-profit sectors.

## ON THE MOVE

**WarnerMedia** has named **Kristy Chan** vice president, publicity for TNT, TBS and truTV. Chan comes to WarnerMedia from Netflix, where she served as director, original series publicity. Before that, she served as vice president of publicity and awards strategy for Universal Television and Universal Television Alternative Studio. In her new post, Chan will oversee a team of publicists and spearhead the publicity effort for the networks' originals, acquisitions, late-night, scripted and unscripted programming.

**Morning Consult** has added former Kanter CEO **Eric Salama** and former Omnicom Public Relations Group CEO **Karen van Bergen** to its board of directors. Salama and van Bergen join the data intelligence company's board following its May announcement of a Series A funding round.

**MWWPR** has hired **Chip Garner** as senior vice president, corporate reputation. Garner comes to MWWPR from British Airways, where he led all media relations, crisis communications, creative and corporate campaigns. He was previously a senior vice president at Ogilvy. In his new position, he will be working across groups and sectors, and will play a key role in expanding the agency's Social CEO offering, which was formally launched in May.

**Cornerstone Government Affairs** has added Christian Lee to its national security team. Lee was most recently a professional staff member on the Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security. He has also served as the acquisition appropriations coordinator in the Coast Guard's Office of Budget and Programs. His Congressional experience includes a stint as the Coast Guard's assistant liaison to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he conducted outreach and facilitated senior level engagements with members of Congress and staff.



**Christian Lee**



## **SPEAKING OUT PAYS OFF FOR CEOs**

Speaking out is paying off for CEOs, according to a new study conducted by FTI Consulting.

Out of the 100 top-performing companies analyzed in “The CEO Brand and Its Impact on Business,” 81 percent are led by CEOs who have a distinct brand and “consistently communicate.”

THE CEO BRAND AND ITS IMPACT ON BUSINESS



Those CEOs topped their less communicative peers by an average of two percent, resulting in what FTI says is \$260B in added shareholder value.

In addition to increased overall performance, an emphasis on CEO communications made companies more likely to successfully withstand the challenges posed by COVID-19.

This is especially true for so-called “stakeholder CEOs.” The study found that stakeholder CEOs, who accounted for 39 percent of the more communicative CEOs, outperformed their peers by an average of 3.75 percent.

The importance of speaking out extends across all market sectors, the study found. Almost nine of out ten (89 percent) of the healthcare companies had vocal CEOs, and tech firms were close behind at 78 percent.

While female CEOs accounted for only six of the 128 CEOs that were included in the study, all of them fell into the more-communicative category.

FTI evaluated the companies with the highest growth in their share prices between Jan. 1, 2015 and Dec. 31, 2019.

## **FLORIDA COUNTY SEEKS MARKETING FIRMS**

The Walton County Tourist Development Council, the government authority that promotes Walton County, Florida’s tourism economy, is seeking proposals from agencies that can provide marketing research services and consulting advice.

TDC wants a marketing research firm to design, conduct, analyze and report on a series of studies to gauge and collect information on Walton County’s visitors, lodging inventory, ad messages and perceptions for the purpose of aiding in the successful marketing of the Visit South Walton brand.

Current budget for the research campaign is \$170,000-\$225,000.

Deadline to submit proposals is 10:30 a.m. (CST) on July 27. Proposals should be sent to: Office of Central Purchasing; 176 Montgomery Circle; DeFuniak Springs, Florida 32435

Bidding agencies must submit one hard copy of their proposals and an original electronic copy on a USB. Proposal fees should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope. All proposals must be clearly marked with the firm/team’s name and address, and the words “Marketing Research Services.”



TDC is separately seeking proposals from full-service ad agencies that can execute a strategic media campaign to promote South Walton as a premier tourist destination.

Scope of the work includes creative services, media planning and buying, as well as digital platform functions and strategies.

That RFP also closes at 10:30 a.m. (CST) on July 27.

[Download the marketing research services and consulting advice RFP.](#)

[Download the advertising services RFP.](#)

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

**Bob Gold & Associates** has been named agency of record for **Keepster**, a start-up that lets users securely save, search and organize text messages, chats, photos and memories in one place on their personal computers. “We wholeheartedly are counting on the agency to help tell a great story about what we are doing and its unique value,” said Keepster CEO and founder Jennifer Simchowitz. The free software for Mac or Windows computers also gives users the ability to turn selected messages and photos into professionally bound and printed books.



**SourceCode Communications** has been named communications agency of record for **Jane**, a Utah-based boutique e-commerce marketplace that gives small businesses a platform for their products. This is Jane’s first agency of record appointed in recent years. In addition to boosting Jane’s recognition in the e-commerce space, SourceCode is tasked with supporting announcements around company hires and a planned expansion of the site’s category offerings. Jane has also been recognized for its work toward social good with its #JaneForGood initiative which gave 10,000 masks to the Utah Department of Health and has donated a portion of the proceeds for every mask the site sells.

**Herald PR**, which represented Harvey Weinstein, has been named agency of record for **Todos Medical** and **CrowdProtocol**, two organizations focused on COVID-19 relief efforts. Todos Medical is an in vitro diagnostics company that offers a comprehensive suite of solutions for the screening and diagnosis of COVID-19 and develops blood tests for the early detection of cancer and Alzheimer’s disease. CrowdProtocol is a platform created to enable the discovery of effective therapeutic treatment protocols utilizing real-world evidence. Weinstein turned to Herald PR president Juda Engelmayer for spokesperson duties in April 2018 after Sitrick And Company split with the former movie mogul.



**Marino** has become the PR partner for **marketSHARE**, a biweekly online discussion that covers lessons and learnings from marketing professionals across all asset classes in real estate. Marino is assisting marketSHARE with media relations and event programming, with a focus on building brand awareness of the regular video series in New York City and the U.S. The series is sponsored by Calgary, Canada-based real estate marketing Chatterson.

**Carve Communications** has added **Baanto**, a developer of solutions that push the boundaries of touch interactivity, to its client roster. Carve’s efforts will be focused on establishing thought leadership for Baanto’s senior executives while driving greater media awareness for its ShadowSense technology. Carve has also signed up consumer electronic tech company **eBuyNow**, hybrid venture capital fund and crowd-funding platform **Florida Funders**, educational resources and supplemental curriculum provider **hand2mind** and software developer **Vizetto**.



## COMMENTARY

**The Trump administration's decision to declare PR war on Dr. Anthony Fauci**, one of the only straight-shooters on the White House COVID-19 task force, isn't going to work.

Team Trump has gone into attack mode against the nation's top infectious disease doctor as part of its re-election strategy.

The White House press team got the ball rolling, sending reporters opposition research on Fauci, alleging missteps that he made during the early months of the pandemic. And then noted medical genius and White House trade advisor Peter Navarro penned a blistering op-ed piece in *USA Today*, saying Fauci "has been wrong about everything I have interacted with him on."



**Dr. Anthony Fauci**

Peter should have been more cautious in putting together his hit job on Fauci. In his zest to torpedo Fauci, Navarro's piece contained "fake news."

Bill Sternberg, editorial page editor, wrote that "several of Navarro's criticisms of Fauci—on the China travel restrictions, the risk from the coronavirus and falling mortality rates—were misleading or lacked context. As such,

Navarro's op-ed did not meet *USA Today's* fact-checking standards."

Then there is Dan Scavino, the White House deputy chief of staff for communications, posting a cartoon mocking Fauci.

Fauci cannot figure out in his "wildest dreams" why he is being targeted by members of the administration, but he wants them to stop the nonsense and put an end to the games.

"It distracts from what I hope would be the common effort of getting this thing under control, rather than this back-and-forth distraction, which just doesn't make any sense," Fauci told *The Atlantic* magazine on July 15.

That's just it. The White House wants it to appear that Fauci's future warnings about COVID-19 also don't make sense.

Donald Trump has a single mission: re-election. Since COVID-19 is the No. 1 obstacle to the re-election mission, he must spread lies that the virus is under control and urge parents to send their kids back to school ASAP.

Fauci speaks the unvarnished truth about the dangers of COVID-19. The administration is attacking him to undermine his credibility when he warns America that the virus isn't just going to just disappear—despite what the president says.

The administration faces an uphill battle in undermining Fauci's authority on COVID-19. The American people are standing by the 79-year-old Brooklyn native.

A Quinnipiac University poll released July 15 found that 65 percent of voters trust COVID-19 info provided by Fauci. Only 26 percent don't. It's the reverse situation for Trump, 67 percent don't trust him on COVID-19 information.

Fauci also got a PR boost from Melinda Gates, who leads the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation with her husband and Microsoft founder Bill Gates

She praised Fauci and his colleague Deborah Birx on July 15 as the only figures in the White House who understand the severity of the pandemic. Gates is "deeply disappointed" by Trump's position on COVID-19.

She had this warning for Trump:

"I think you'll see the American people speak in the fall," Gates told the *Financial Times*. "The populace needs to speak out against any leader that's not using the tools and the data available to fight COVID-19."

**Make the Hatch Act Great Again.** Wouldn't it be great to return to the days when the biggest public concern about the White House is about a staffer shilling for a product?

Clueless Ivanka Trump, who somehow doesn't see nepotism in her selection as a White House adviser, mugged for the camera on July 15, while holding a can of Goya beans, for a picture on her Twitter, Facebook and Instagram feeds. That promo followed kind words about her dad from the CEO of the largest Hispanic-owned food company in the US.

Ethics experts say Ivanka violated the Hatch Act's ban on public figures using their office to endorse or promote a product or service.

And of course, scandal-loving Team Trump took it up a notch, with the president putting a line-up of Goya products on his desk in the Oval Office and giving them thumbs-ups.

Sadly, the Hatch Act is small potatoes when the White House denies the reality of a global pandemic, fails to express empathy for the families of the 135K-plus Americans killed by COVID-19, plays footsy with Vladimir Putin by taking no action against him for putting bounties on the heads of American soldiers, dishes out lie after lie after lie (e.g., the *Washington Post* has counted more than 20K so far), tears mothers away from their children, guts environmental regulations, begs China for help in the upcoming election, and pardons Roger Stone, who was convicted of obstructing a Congressional probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

A Joe Biden presidency would certainly restore luster to the Hatch Act.

**The White House has finally found a press secretary who tells it like it is.** The incomparable Kayleigh McEnany told reporters on July 16 that Donald Trump wants schools to open hell or high water in the fall and won't let any inconvenient science stand in the way.

"The President has said unmistakably that he wants schools to open... and when he says 'open' he means open and full, kids being able to attend each and every day at their school," McEnany said at a press briefing. "The science should not stand in the way of this."

Realizing she committed the mortal sin of Team Trump, telling the truth, McEnany then went into full magical thinking mode. "The science is on our side here, and we encourage localities and states to just simply follow the science," she said. "Open our schools. It's very damaging to our children."

As McEnany hustled to return to Trump's honor roll of sycophants, the Center for Public Integrity released a White House coronavirus task force report, warning that 18 states are in the "red zone" for COVID-19, meaning they should go into lockdown mode.

Those school bells aren't going to be ringing any day soon.

—Kevin McCauley