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### **LA COMMUNITY COLLEGE NEEDS CRISIS PR**

The Los Angeles Community College District, which serves more than 225K students, wants to hire a firm for crisis communications and emergency information management.

It wants a firm to handle “human-caused or natural disasters, in which there is an urgent, time-sensitive need, possibly in an emergency operations center environment, to develop

and disseminate a variety of accurate, multi-platform, multi-lingual information,” according to its RFP.

The desired firm will handle internal/external messaging, press conferences, briefing papers, focus groups, video, social media and conduct outreach to multi-lingual, ethnic and underserved communities.

The District issued a separate RFP for a firm to help the District “build support for its legislative policy and advocacy agenda,” according to the document

Both contracts run for two years with three possible annual extensions.

Proposals are due April 20. They go to:

Attention: Jim Watson, Contracts Manager  
Los Angeles Community College District - Contracts Office

770 Wilshire Boulevard, 6th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90017

See the RFP at <https://www.odwyerpr.com/members/rfps/Los-Angeles-Community-College-District-RFP.pdf>.

### **TOP ALCOHOL LOBBYIST GOES TO POT**

Mark Gorman, who led government relations for the Distilled Spirits Council of the US for 20 years, has joined the National Assn. of Cannabis Businesses as executive VP/COO.

At DISCUS, Gorman spearheaded public policy and advocacy efforts on the federal and state levels. He exited the group as senior advisor to CEO Chris Swonger.

Earlier, Gorman did a seven-year government affairs stint at the National Restaurant Assn., served as deputy director of General Mills’ DC office and worked as tax aide to Republican Sen. John Chafee (R-RI).



**Mark Gorman**

Established in 2017, the NACB is dedicated to promoting national standards for responsible advertising and marketing of cannabis products, as well as other best practice guidelines.

It represents more than 400 member-businesses, as well as cannabis professionals throughout the country.

### **COVID-19 HITS IPG FINANCIAL TARGETS**

CEO Michael Roth has yanked Interpublic’s full-year financial projection of three percent organic growth for 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“In light of significant macroeconomic uncertainty resulting from the severity of the COVID-19 crisis, and the unknown magnitude and duration of its impact, it is appropriate to withdraw the company’s previously issued financial performance targets for full-year 2020,” IPG said in an 8-K statement released to the Securities and Exchange Commission on March 26.

Noting that COVID-19 has resulted in human tragedy and macroeconomic cost throughout the world, Roth said IPG remains focused on protecting the health and safety of its employees around the world, serving its clients, and supporting its communities.

IPG on March 30 announced that it raised \$640M via the sale of senior notes due 2030 to retire all or portion of \$500M in debt due this year and next.

The ad/PR conglomerate also arranged a new \$500M 364-day credit line to bolster its existing \$1.5B facility.

Roth said the moves fortify IPG’s financial stability in light of current market uncertainty.



**Michael Roth**

### **SC JOHNSON NAMES VANDERMOLLEN CCO**

Alan VanderMolen, former international president of WE Communications and vice chairman at Edelman, has joined SC Johnson as senior VP and chief communications officer, according to a company representative.

VanderMolen left WE last year after spending three years leading its European and Asia-Pacific operations. Before coming to WE, he was at Edelman, where over 13 years, he held such positions as vice chairman, DJE Holdings and president, Asia Pacific.

He takes over from Kelly Semrau, who left the company in January to become chairman of the board at the World Environment Center.

VanderMolen will oversee SC Johnson’s internal and external communications, reporting to CEO Fisk Johnson. He will be based in SC Johnson’s Racine, WI headquarters.

Founded in 1886, SC Johnson employs 13,000 people, and its stable of brands includes Glade, Windex and Pledge. The company brought in \$10.5 billion in revenue for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, according to *Forbes*.



**Alan VanderMolen**

## **EMPLOYERS TRUSTED COVID-19 INFO SOURCE**

The private sector plays a vital role in informing the public on the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as employees place considerably more trust in their employers to accurately communicate the crisis compared to government and the



media, and expect frequent updates regarding coronavirus-related health and workplace policies, according to a new report by Edelman.

Edelman's COVID-19 report, a special edition of the agency's annual Trust Barometer Report, found that employers are seen as the most credible source for coronavirus-related communication: 63 percent of global respondents said they'll believe information provided to them by their employers after seeing that information repeated two times, compared to 58 percent for a government website, 56 percent for a health company website, 51 percent for traditional media and 28 percent for social media.

More respondents (13 percent) said they'll automatically assume coronavirus information provided to them by their employers is true, beating all other communications channels with the exception of government websites, which ranked as the most credible channel (14 percent).

Nearly two thirds (62 percent) of respondents said they trust their employer to respond effectively and responsibly to the coronavirus outbreak, beating out the government, NGOs, the media, schools and educational institutions and private or government-run health insurance companies. In almost all of the 10 countries polled—with the exception of Germany and Canada—respondents ranked “my employer” as better prepared for the virus than “my country.”

The news media still wins in terms of overall exposure: 64 percent of respondents said they get most of their coronavirus-related updates from major news outlets. Young people (18 to 34) rely on a mix of social media (54 percent) and mainstream news (56 percent) to keep them informed of the crisis, while older people (55 and up) rank mainstream media as nearly three times more trustworthy than social media (71 percent vs. 25 percent, respectively). Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of all respondents said they're concerned about fake news and misinformation surrounding the crisis.

The Edelman report also found that scientists and doctors—along with WHO and CDC officials—rate among the most trusted COVID-19 spokespersons, achieving trust scores ranging from 68 to 83 percent. Employer CEOs came in at 54 percent. Government officials and journalists both ranked lowest, each with under 50 percent trust.

Americans have placed high expectations on their employers to respond to the coronavirus crisis and communicate regularly what measures they're taking to ensure the health and safety of employees: 78 percent said they expect businesses to act to protect employees and local communities, 63 percent said they want daily updates on COVID-19, 57 percent want clarity on how many colleagues have contracted the virus and 53 percent want information regarding how the virus is affecting their organization's ability to operate.

A separate March survey by G&S Business Communications found that more than three-quarters (77 percent) of employed Americans think their company is doing a good job communicating with staff about COVID-19, and 40 percent say they're “very satisfied” with coronavirus-related communication they've received from their employers. More than half (55 percent) claim their company has communicated with staff regarding coronavirus policies on at least a daily basis in the last week.

Edelman's study surveyed 1,000 people in Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Africa, South Korea, the U.K. and the U.S. between March 6 and March 10.

## **PUBLICIS DROPS GUIDANCE**

Publicis Groupe, which will release its first-quarter financials on April 23, has decided not to issue guidance due to the “uncertain, volatile and unprecedented economic situation.”

Noting the COVID-19 pandemic has been the “source of great suffering,” which “has forced a third of the global population to restrict its movements,” CEO Arthur Sadoun said its “difficult to accurately predict the evolution of advertising and marketing spend.”

He did say revenues at the end of February were in line with Publicis' 2020 roadmap.



## **NEWS OF FIRMS**

**Coyne PR** and **Pacira BioSciences** have joined forces on a project addressing the effects of the continuing opioid epidemic in the U.S. Part of Pacira's unbranded Choices Matter campaign, the project began as a series of three short testimonials illustrating the problems that can result from legal opioid prescriptions when the dangers of these medications are not understood. Coyne and Pacira eventually expanded it into a 40-minute documentary, “Gateway,” that is intended to offer a new view of how overprescribing opioids can have such consequences as addiction and dependence. The documentary, which had its LA premiere last month, has already won the best documentary feature prize at the LA Movie Awards and received an award of merit for documentary short from the Impact DOCS Awards.

**InkHouse** offered a March 25 free virtual briefing on best practices for communications during the COVID-19 crisis. The discussion went over the results of research conducted by InkHouse in collaboration with Sam Whitmore, the founder and editor of Sam Whitmore's Media Survey, which provides tech media analysis and consulting to tech PR pros and media buyers. InkHouse is offering what it calls the COVID-19 PR Strategies Toolkit, which offers information on such topics as how to take an event virtual and working from home.

**Sutherlandgold** has partnered with creative agency Moonshot on a coronavirus communications resource page for CEOs and communicators. The intention of the page is to provide insights and advice on how brands can navigate their way through the changes that the coronavirus has made in the business world, with planned conferences being called off and digital becoming the only communications channel for many professionals. To see the resource page, click [here](#).



## NH WANTS CHILD CARE SUPPORT PR

New Hampshire's Dept. of Public Health wants to hire a PR firm to gauge the perception of child support services and then launch a communications campaign to bolster awareness of the program in the Granite State.



The firm will work with the public health department to evaluate current service gaps in the child support program, conduct a media audit, analyze public-facing materials and do outreach to key stakeholders.

New Hampshire is calling for focus groups and "situational analysis on the Bureau of Child Support status of current public relations regarding services, access to services, effectiveness of current multi-media messaging and materials, and communication," according to the RFP. After reviewing the research findings, the firm will "develop an effective brand manifesto in order to improve the child support experience for the public, customers, stakeholders and staff."

Responses are due April 8. They go to:

State of New Hampshire; Department of Health and Human Services; Jennifer Hackett, Contract Specialist; Bureau of Contracts & Procurements; 129 Pleasant Street; Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Click [here](#) for the RFP.

## AMSTERDAM & PARTNERS REPS VENEZUELA

Amsterdam & Partners will receive a \$4M flat fee to push for the removal of US sanctions on Venezuela. The US does not recognize the government of Venezuela.

A&P assumed the work of Foley & Lardner, which resigned the account last month after Florida Senator Rick Scott blasted it for representing the "brutal regime" of Nicolas Maduro.

F&L was in line for a \$12.5M flat fee for devising a "narrative and strategy" to help Venezuela remove the sanctions.

The US on March 26 charged Maduro and his associates with narco-terrorism, alleging they have "deployed cocaine as a weapon" to undermine the US, according to attorney general Bill Barr.

A&P's contract, which runs through December, is with Venezuela's attorney general Reinaldo Munoz Pedroza, who was not named in the US indictment.

## NATO TAPS AKIN GUMP FOR BAILOUT

The National Association of Theatre Owners is using Akin Gump to push for a cut of the federal bailout fund related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 18, NATO called on Congress and the White House to consider relief measures to bolster the industry and its "150,000 employees, who live and work in practically every Congressional District, to weather the present COVID-19 pandemic crisis."

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld's NATO lobbying team includes Arshi Siddiqui, former aide to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi; Brendan Dunn, one-time staffer for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell; Brian Pomper, who worked for Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT); Zach Rudisill, ex-aide to Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH), and Lauren O'Brien, ex-staffer for Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY).

## MEDIA MANEUVERS

**Hightimes Holding Corp.**, whose stable of cannabis-focused publications includes *High Times*, *Dope* and *Culture*, has announced the signing of a letter of intent to acquire California-based cannabis holding company Humboldt Heritage Inc. and its subsidiaries Humboldt Sun Growers Guild and Grateful Eight LLC. Hightimes says the acquisition gives them cannabis growing, processing and product manufacturing capabilities, and will make the company one of California's largest vertically integrated operators.



**Lee Enterprises**, which owns such newspapers as the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and *Arizona Daily Sun*, has launched Health Bright Marketing, a full-service marketing company that specializes in healthcare organizations. Health Bright is headquartered in Michigan alongside Sunny Media, a Lee Enterprises-owned agency specializing in marketing services for the automotive industry. Lee closed a deal on March 16 to buy 31 daily newspapers, including the *Buffalo News*, from Berkshire Hathaway and its BH Media Group.

**W magazine**, which Condé Nast sold to Future Media Group in June, is going on hiatus. The magazine's next print issue, which had been set to publish in May, is being postponed indefinitely. A report in the *New York Times* said that editor Sara Moonves called her staff on March 23 to inform many of them that they were being furloughed. Those who work on the publication's online content are staying on, but their salaries will be cut back.

Former *New York Times* reporter and editor **Alan Finder** died at 72 on March 24, several weeks after having tested positive for COVID-19. Finder served in a variety of positions at the paper, including city hall bureau chief, and was assistant editor on the foreign desk when he retired in 2011. Before coming to the Times, he had been a reporter at *Newsday* and *The Record* in Hackensack, NJ. After retiring from the Times, he returned to The Record to edit a weekly feature news section.



**Alan Finder**

The postponement of the Tokyo Olympics is tightening the screws on a difficult economic situation for **Comcast**, parent company to **NBCUniversal**. The launch of NBC Universal's Peacock streaming service, which is set to go wide in July, was expected to get a big boost from the games. In addition, the *Los Angeles Times* reports that, as of the beginning of March, NBCUniversal had sold 90 percent of the advertising spots for the games, with a price tag of \$1.25 billion. NBC paid \$1.1 billion for rights to the Olympics.

Sports journalism website **The Athletic** is coming up against a pretty tough problem: It has next to nothing to write about. Founded in 2016, The Athletic is an ad-free site, covering its expenses through subscription revenue. Company co-founder and CEO Adam Hansmann told the *Financial Times* that readership numbers for the site have been dropping, and he expects revenue for the site to drop over the next few months. The FT also reports that the site, which expanded to the UK in August, is dropping the £4.99 (about \$5.86) monthly paywall in the country for the next three months.

## **COVID-19 HIKES DIGITAL USAGE, NOT TRENDS**

Daily life has dramatically changed over the past few weeks, and Americans have turned to digital platforms in record numbers to stay informed about the latest news.

Online news readership has soared 70 percent compared to one month ago, a Kivvit analysis of U.S. news publisher data found.



**Alex Lewis**

We also learned that news readers are spending 57 percent more time on stories featuring “coronavirus” or “COVID-19” in the headline.

But to access the ever-changing news, people are largely using the same methods they typically have: mobile devices and a mix of channels, including social media, search engines and browsing news websites. Two behavior changes worth noting, however, are that people are using desktops/laptops and clicking on links shared with them via text/email at a slightly higher rate than usual.

Our data also tells us the rise in digital engagement has created an opportunity to reach these audiences.

According to Kivvit’s own Facebook advertising tracking—which collectively represents 33.3 million impressions delivered to 22.8 million people between December 1 and March 20—client campaigns are continuing to outperform industry- and firm-wide benchmarks despite the dramatic changes we’ve seen since the arrival of COVID-19.

Two vital measures of ad effectiveness and efficiency—click-through rate and cost-per-click—have been stronger in March than they were in December and January, underscoring that COVID-19 has not impaired digital advertising performance. These indicators have also been consistently strong across other social platforms, display, video and search engine marketing.

A plurality of internet users (37.3 percent) believe companies should continue to advertise as normal, while 35 percent do not have an opinion either way, according to a Global Web Index survey of U.S. internet users conducted last week.

Although there is not widespread consumer opposition to organizations continuing to advertise, it’s crucial that advertisers conduct a thorough analysis of campaigns to ensure messaging and calls to action are relevant and sensitive to today’s new normal.

For example, Google announced on March 18 that it is reevaluating advertising creative that depicts interactions like handshakes, hugs, and high-fives, since social distancing is an important tactic in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

Even with the world changing around us in unprecedented ways, the dramatic increase in digital engagement means many awareness and branding campaigns can expect to be more effective, affordable and efficient by refocusing on the fundamentals, which have largely remained unchanged: content and targeting must continue to be tailored to the audiences that organizations are trying to reach, and a mobile-op-



**Zach Silber**

timized, multi-channel approach remains the best practice.

We will continue to update our analysis as data becomes available.

*Alex Lewis is a digital principal and Zach Silber is the chief innovation officer at Kivvit.*

## **AT-HOME WORKERS MISS GETTING EXERCISE**

The biggest challenge faced by America’s growing army of people working remotely from home is getting enough exercise, according to a snap poll conducted by G&S Business Communications on March 20 and 21.

Dealing with the effects of a newly sedentary lifestyle was cited as a problem for 45 percent of the more than 1,000 people surveyed in the online poll. Coming close behind were setting up technology (mentioned by 40 percent), managing time effectively (36 percent) and communicating with colleagues (31 percent).

Overall, the transition to working remotely seems to be going rather well. About eight in ten respondents (79 percent) who have switched to working from home due to the coronavirus say it was at least somewhat easy for them personally to adapt to remote working, while 68 percent say it was at least somewhat easy for their company as a whole to adapt to remote working.

The complications of working from home were greater for those who have children under the age of 18 living at home with them. Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of those respondents said they are balancing the need to keep kids occupied with getting work done. Almost half (46 percent) are dealing with homeschooling, and 44 percent are navigating distractions from their children.

Not surprisingly, the use of video meetings as a way to connect with colleagues is on the rise, with thirty percent of new remote workers say they are using video meetings more than they were two weeks ago.

But those video meetings are not coming without their share of anxiety. A third of respondents (33 percent) said they have more motivations to dress nicely when working from home if they know they have video meetings during the day, while 24 percent simply don’t want people to see their appearance and 18 percent think others will judge their home décor when it is seen on video.

When it comes to those who are still going in to work, 58 percent say their job cannot be done remotely, with 11 percent saying they are still going to work because they are not worried about contracting the coronavirus.

Over half of respondents going in to work at a physical location (52 percent) said that trying to maintain social distancing is tough. Over a quarter (26 percent) are finding it challenging to maintain their focus on job duties. However, 77 percent of them believe their company/organization cares about the health of employees, with 77 percent also saying their employer has done a good job explaining to employees the safety precautions that are being taken at physical locations.

To see G&S’s full “Americans Reach a Stressing Point” study, go to <https://info.gscommunications.com/coronavirus/new-study-americans-reach-a-stressing-point>.





## **LAMBERT PICKS UP PAINLESS ADVERTISING**

Lambert & Co. has acquired branding, creative and digital agency Fairly Painless Advertising. The deal marks Lambert's third transaction in the last six months. Terms of the deal, which closed in early March, were not disclosed. Fairly Painless will operate as a division of Lambert, retaining the FP brand (with subtext, a Lambert company).



**Chris Cook**

The agency's current team, led by CEO Chris Cook, will remain in place. Founded in 1992, Holland, MI-based Fairly Painless works with both B2B and consumer-facing brands, in such sectors as automotive and manufacturing, consumer products, education, financial services, non-profit and retail. Its services include research, planning and creative services, brand strategy, video production, web development, digital marketing services and ad buying.

"Fairly Painless is an immediate complement to our clients and team," said Lambert founder and CEO Jeff Lambert.

## **MERCURY ROLLS DICE FOR RESORTS WORLD**

Omnicom's Mercury unit is working Washington for Resorts World Casino in Queens, on matters related to gaming in the federal stimulus package.

Malaysia's Genting Group, one of Asia's largest multinationals with interests in leisure & hospitality, oil palm plantations, power generation, oil & gas, real estate, life sciences and biotechnology, owns Resorts World Casino.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, Genting closed the Aqueduct facility and a casino in upstate Monticello for at least two weeks "for the health and safety of our workforce, patrons and community."

Mercury partner Charlie King handles the DC bailout push. He's well-connected in New York Democratic politics. King ran the re-election campaign of Harlem Congressman Charlie Rangel and advised Governor Andrew Cuomo on his re-election effort.

## **EX-CLINTON AIDE JOINS TEAM BIDEN**

Lily Adams, who was communications director for Kamala Harris' presidential bid and a spokesperson for Hillary Clinton's 2016 run for the White House, has joined Unite the Country, the PAC supporting Joe Biden's campaign, as chief communications officer.

Adams has served as deputy communications director at the Democratic National Committee, and has held executive posts on campaigns for U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) and former Ohio governor Ted Strickland.



**Lily Adams**

Unite the Country CEO Steve Schale called Adams "a well-respected, veteran communications strategist."

Adams's hire comes as the PAC expands its presence in anticipation of the Democratic National Convention. Schale says the organization is "turning our focus to the November fight."

Unite the Country has also brought on Jennifer Clyburn Reed, daughter of Rep. Jin Clyburn (D-SC), as a member of its board of directors.

## **ON THE MOVE**

**Curley Company**, which is based in DC, has hired **Tina Anthony** as vice president, digital. Anthony comes to Curley from the Consumer Technology Association, where she most recently served as director of digital strategy. While at CTA, Anthony built the social media strategy for CES, the organization's annual trade show. She was previously a senior account executive in Ketchum's D.C. office and served as regional digital marketing manager for Forbes. At Curley, Anthony oversees digital strategy for a number of clients, working with them to establish, grow and advance their reputation, brand and causes.



**Tina Anthony**

**TeamSupport**, a business-to-business focused customer support software solution, has appointed **Connie Glover** as vice president of marketing and communications. Glover joins TeamSupport from CMarie Marketing Studio, a marketing and PR firm serving Charlottesville, VA; Dallas and southern California. She has worked with clients in such market sectors as higher education, interior building products and technology.

**I-Mab**, a clinical stage biopharmaceutical company, has appointed **Gigi Feng** as vice president, global head of corporate communications, effective April 20. Feng was previously Asia Pacific regional head of corporate affairs at Amgen, where she led communications efforts, including executive communications, media relations, employee engagement and philanthropy. Before joining Amgen, she held a series of communications leadership roles at Sanofi, and also led the strategic communications group at APCO Worldwide in Shanghai.

## **NEWS OF FIRMS**

**Hispanicize Wire**, a Latinx-owned and operated, multimedia press release distribution service aimed at U.S. Hispanic journalists, influencers and thought leaders, has rebranded as **Latinx Newswire**. Latinx Newswire chief operating officer Jersain Cruz will continue in his role. The rebranding will differentiate the wire service from its former sister company, Hispanicize Media Group, which was acquired last year by NGL Collective, the multi-platform media company co-founded by actor John Leguizamo. As part of its rebrand, Latinx Newswire has upgraded its website and is planning to launch new services for small business clients and expand its national multimedia website partner.



**Milldam Public Relations**, a Boston-based firm that works with small and midsize technology, energy, telecommunications and facilities companies, is offering a free one-hour communications consultation to mission-critical providers and vendors. The consultation will be handled through the agency's mission-critical crisis communications practice. Milldam says the offer comes in response to the increased reliance on data centers and telecom for such purposes as telecommuting and telemedicine. "With the mission-critical industry at the epicenter of this crisis, there is a great opportunity to do good by making certain services available to aid the recovery process," said Milldam Public Relations president Adam Waitkunas.

## COMMENTARY

**Donald Trump is the whirling dervish of crisis managers**, telling the nation on March 24 that he wants the country “opened up and just raring to go by Easter” (April 12) and then shifting gears on March 28 by threatening to quarantine metropolitan New York City, the nation’s financial and media capital.



What’s going on?

After a chorus of opposition led by cool, calm and collected New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, Trump backed down from his proposed Great Northeast Wall and backed a nothing new travel advisory from the Centers for Disease Control and Protection that urged New York, New Jersey and Connecticut residents to forget about non-essential travel beyond the region.

That advisory only emphasized what Cuomo has been telling the Empire State over the past two weeks of the pandemic.

And on the Easter front, Trump apparently has now abandoned his “beautiful” dream of having churches packed on the big day. He extended the self-distancing guidelines through April and now anticipates the economic resurrection will begin on June 1.

The self-proclaimed wartime president has shunned the experts on pandemics and is playing it by ear in the fight.

He can’t fall back on his basic strategy of bullying an opponent because he can’t bully what he refers to as the “invisible enemy.”

Even the pro-Trump *New York Post* has had it, begging the president on March 29 to stop “winging it.”

Rupert Murdoch’s flagship editorialized that Trump may have suggested a quarantine just to run the idea up the flagpole to see if anybody salutes.

It then noted: “*But the coronavirus pandemic requires a different approach. You can’t just throw out, ‘Hey, Easter would be nice’ without asking if the task force he’s assembled, agrees.*

*“You can’t — or at least shouldn’t — send the tri-state area into a tizzy while you mull about quarantining entire sections of the nation. By all means, ask the CDC and Vice President Mike Pence’s group if they think a state lockdown would be helpful. Don’t tweet it.”*

The paper founded by Alexander Hamilton wants Trump to “stop speaking off the top of his head” because we have enough to worry about these days.

Well done, Rupert. You should now focus on reeling in Sean Hannity and the gang of COVIDIOTS at Fox News.

**Any federal policy to jumpstart the economy** prior to the containment of COVID-19 would result in many unnecessary deaths, according to Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates.

“There really is no middle ground, and it’s very tough to say to people, ‘Hey, keep going to restaurants, go buy new

houses, ignore that pile of bodies over in the corner. We want you to keep spending because there’s maybe a politician who thinks GDP growth is all that counts,” Gates said March 24 during a TED interview. “It’s very irresponsible for somebody to suggest that we can have the best of both worlds.”

Admitting that COVID-19 has delivered a big blow to the economy, he said: “But bringing the economy back ... that’s more of a reversible thing than bringing people back to life. So we’re going to take the pain in the economic dimension — huge pain — in order to minimize the pain in the diseases-and-death dimension.”

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has spent \$100M to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

**China’s decision to expel American journalists** is “uniquely damaging and reckless as the world continues the struggle to control this disease, a struggle that will require the free flow of reliable news and information,” wrote the publishers of the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* in their open letter to the Chinese government.

They protested the “growing crackdown on independent media” that “threatens to deprive the world of critical information at a perilous moment.”

WSJ’s William Lewis, WaPo’s Fred Ryan and NYT’s A.G. Sulzberger wrote: “Journalism bolsters strong, confident societies by providing to leaders and citizens important information and awareness to inform their lives and decisions — even, perhaps especially, when it is challenging to governments.”

We hope the self-proclaimed “wartime president” will declare a ceasefire on his war against the media, which he calls the “enemy of the people.”

**Bank of America received a PR black eye** over after a staff backlash at its One Bryant Park head office over its decision to ban them from executing trades at home without management approval.

That policy ran counter to competitors like Goldman Sachs and JPMorganChase, which allowed staffers to execute trades from home to allay fears over the COVID-19 pandemic.

BoFA reversed course on March 24, allowing its global markets staff to work at home.

**“Fake news” sites love Google**, according to the Global Disinformation Index, which gauges the trustworthiness of 70K websites. It found that European fake sites earned about \$75M a year from ads placed by Google.

The *Financial Times* reported that a Spanish disinformation site ran an ad placed by Google on the Amnesty International site that claimed the US blamed Russia for COVID-19.

A Google spokesperson criticized the GDI report, saying its definition of disinformation is unclear.

—Kevin McCauley