



**Kevin McCauley**  
Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's

The Inside News of Public Relations  
& Marketing Communications [odwyerpr.com](http://odwyerpr.com)

271 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016  
212/679-2471. Fax: 212/683-2750  
[www.odwyerpr.com](http://www.odwyerpr.com); [jobs.odwyerpr.com](mailto:jobs.odwyerpr.com)

March 25, 2024 Vol. 57 No. 13

## CA NEEDS PR FOR 'SAVE OUR WATER' PUSH

California is looking for a firm to handle media strategy and outreach for its statewide "Save Our Water" public education campaign.



Gov. Gavin Newsom issued a proclamation on Oct. 19, 2021 that extended the drought emergency to the state's 58 counties.

He rescinded the emergency last March, but many areas of the state still experience water supply shortages due to depleted groundwater resources.

The Save Our Water campaign educates people about the extreme weather projected to reduce the overall amount of water available to support Californians by 10 percent in 2040.

The selected firm will tackle the two priorities of the Save Our Water push.

The first priority is to encourage Californians to make conservation a way of life year-round, giving them educational resources and tips to save water. The second is to educate Californians on yard transformation, providing resources and tools to replace thirsty lawns with water-wise landscapes.

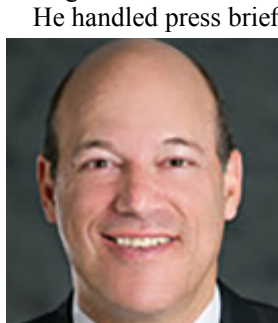
California plans to award a two-year contract.

Proposals are due April 2. Send them via express mail, UPS or Federal Express to: Department of Water Resources; Contract Services; Attn: Christina Pal; 715 P Street, 7th Fl., DBS #19; Sacramento, CA 95814.

[Read the RFP.](#)

## DUBYA'S PRESS SEC COUNSELS BCW

Ari Fleischer, who was George W. Bush's press secretary, has signed on as a consultant at BCW.



**Ari Fleischer**

He handled press briefings from 2001 to 2003 and was key spokesperson during the 9/11 terror attacks and US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fleischer, who runs his own consultancy, is the author of *Suppression, Deception, Snobbery and Bias*, a book about "how the press keeps getting so much wrong" according to BCW's announcement.

Corey duBrowa, BCW CEO, said Fleischer has extraordinary experience in delivering world-class strategic counsel, issues management and campaign development.

WPP is merging BCW and Hill + Knowlton on July 1 to create Burson.

## EDELMAN IRONS OUT PACT WITH BAHAMAS

[Edelman](#) is negotiating a formal contract with the Bahamas for strategic communications on issues impacting its reputation abroad.

The two-month pact will be worth \$100K in fees, plus expenses, for services such as scenario planning, media relations and materials development.

Edelman's agreement will be with the office of the prime minister Philip Davis, who last month issued a statement about the Bahamas being a "safe destination" for visitors.

His government is "alert, attentive, and proactive" to ensure the country is "welcoming" to travelers.

Philips' statement followed the US State Dept's decision on Jan. 26 to issue a Level 2 (exercise increased caution) travel advisory for the Bahamas due to violent crime and gang-on-gang violence.

The Bahamas had used [Weber Shandwick](#) for PR but its contact ended at the end of 2023.



## GOOGLE'S BROWNING MOVES TO BRUNSWICK

Michaela Browning, Google's VP & Asia-Pacific head of government and public policy, will join Brunswick Group on April 1 as CEO of the APAC region.

With managing partner Lisa Foley, Browning will coordinate activity across Brunswick's offices in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Singapore, Sydney and Tokyo.

She will counsel clients in areas such as geopolitics, cybersecurity, governmental regulations, financial governance and digital transformation.

Prior to Google, Browning held various posts in the Australian government, including senior international advisor to the foreign and defense ministers, and the first CEO of the National Foundation for Australia China Relations.

Brunswick CEO Neal Wolin called Browning "an accomplished strategic leader with extensive experience as a trusted advisor to senior business and political figures across Asia-Pacific."

He said the critical advisory firm has built a substantial business in the APAC region during the past 20 years, and sees extraordinary opportunities for growth.



**Michaela Browning**

## REPORTERS STEP UP (A BIT) USE OF AI

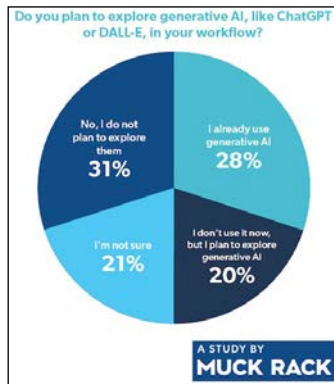
AI may still be viewed with a wary eye by media pros, but its use is growing, according to a study from Muck Rack.

According to the PR management platform's [State of Journalism 2024](#) report, which surveyed more than 1,106 people (mostly U.S.-based journalists) from Jan. 3 to Feb. 9, more than a quarter of respondents (28 percent) use generative AI in their work, with another 20 percent saying they plan to explore its uses.

That still falls behind the percentage of PR pros (64 percent) who reported using AI in the platform's most recent [State of AI in PR](#) report.

For journalists who use AI, the two most popular uses are brainstorming (52 percent) and research (51 percent). AI is also being used to draft headlines (34 percent), outlines (31 percent), social posts (28 percent) and story copy (20 percent).

However, media organizations are proving to be rather slow to develop rules for handling AI. Only 24 percent of respondents said that their newsrooms had AI case policies for AI.



Social media also remains a pivotal tool for journalists to use in producing their work, with 33 percent rating it as very important, 18 percent as important and 21 percent as moderately important.

However, social media's major value for journalists lies in promoting their work. Almost half (47 percent) of survey respondents said that it was a "very important" tool

for getting out the word about their stories, with 23 percent calling it important and 17 saying it is moderately important.

The most valuable social media channel for journalists is X, which is cited by 36 percent of respondents. Facebook sits at second (22 percent), with LinkedIn (17 percent) and Instagram following behind. The study authors also note that "only a few people mention Meta's X alternative, Threads."

In addition, more than eight in 10 (81 percent) said that they plan to stay on X.

## BUFFALO WANTS TO PUSH BENEFITS OF TREES

Buffalo's Dept. of Public Works, Parks and Streets is looking for a firm to handle community outreach and education for its Buffalo Equity in Street Trees (B.E.S.T.) program.

The effort will focus on community outreach in areas that are identified as climate and economic justice zones.

The firm will implement community and ambassador programs to amplify the voices of historically underrepresented communities in urban forest planning and ensure resident buy-in.



It will work with city officials to spread awareness of the value of tree planting/maintenance and benefits of a robust tree canopy.

Buffalo will issue a one-year contract with options for two more one-year periods.

Proposals are due April 5. They go to: Andrew R. Rabb; Deputy Commissioner; DPW, Parks and Recreation; 65 Niagara Square; Room 505 City Hall; Buffalo, NY 14202.

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

## ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

[Relevance International](#) signs on as agency of record in the UK and Ireland for the **Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau**, the global destination marketing organization for the city of Beverly Hills. Led by Relevance's London office, the agency's efforts will focus on raising BHCVB's presence, and attracting a wider audience to Beverly Hills with an increased focus on catering to Gen-Z via consumer and luxury lifestyle media. The scope of work includes thought leadership initiatives for BHCVB CEO Julie Wager, as well as media relations, trend stories, timely newsjacking and press trips.



[5W Public Relations](#) toasts ultra-premium añejo tequila brand **Emyla Tequila**. 5W will partner with Emyla on a launch campaign, in addition to working to raise awareness of the brand in the beverage trade space. Additional services will include earned media relations, tequila influencer outreach, trade publications outreach, an awards program and select activations. "5W brings a wealth of experience launching new spirits brands," said Emyla founder Art Davtyan.

**Barabino & Partners**, a leading Italian PR firm, is selected as communications advisor for luxury menswear brand **Luca Faloni** in the US and German markets. The agency aims to bolster the brand's presence and promote its artistry and craftsmanship internationally through its offices in New York, Berlin and Munich. Founded in 2014, Luca Faloni employs a direct-to-consumer approach, sourcing natural materials such as linen, cashmere, cotton and leather.

[PAN Communications](#) signs on to work with **Powin Energy**, which designs safe and scalable battery energy storage systems for utility-scale, C&I, and microgrid applications.

The agency will be tasked with amplifying Powin's presence and brand authority in the clean energy sector. "Their extensive experience in both the tech and renewable industries, coupled with their global presence and strategic approach to integrated storytelling, makes them the perfect partner to help elevate our brand," said Powin president Anthony Carroll.

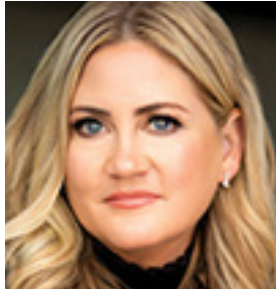


**LDPR** is engaged as agency of record for **the Andaz Costa Rica Resort at Peninsula Papagayo** and **The Confidante, Miami Beach**, which is being rebranded into the Andaz Miami Beach, the first Andaz in Florida (opening in late 2024). The Andaz Costa Rica Resort offers guests access to three secluded beaches, four pools, four restaurants, and extensive wellness programming at ONDA Spa. Hyatt Hotels Corporation and Sunstone Hotel Investors are updating The Confidante, into a retreat that will include an immersive dining experience with culinary partner José Andrés Group.

**SIMBOL Communications** signs up **Caterpy Group Inc.**, which makes patented no-tie elastic laces that convert any laceable shoe into a step-in, no-tie shoe. SIMBOL will provide media and public relations to broaden the brand's client base. Their efforts will target sectors including general outdoor, active lifestyle, senior living and fashion, working with relevant media and influencers in all of these fields.

## **A PLAYBOOK FOR CPG CHALLENGER BRANDS**

It's been a doozy of a time for Consumer Packaged Goods challenger brands over the last few years. We've seen an influx of fantastic brands shutter doors as the industry faces insurmountable headwinds, and it's going to be a slow build before we start seeing a sense of normalcy.



**Rachel Kay**

The good news is that overall interest in better-for-you and niche CPG brands continues to build as consumer interest in food as medicine, health-boosting whole foods and brands that support planetary health isn't going anywhere. It's not just tough-as-nails emerging brands leading the way. The biggest food

manufacturers in the world are investing heavily in healthier options as a growing part of their brand portfolios.

So, what's the secret to a long and prosperous shelf life? Below are some tips to help you thrive as a challenger brand.

### **Articulating your point of difference**

We often speak with brands who claim to be creating a new category, but that's rarely the case. Proof of concept is what breeds innovation, so the real opportunity is to one-up the competition with a fresh point of view. What do you bring that's new and better? Is it a nutritional benefit? Is it a modern spin on an old favorite? Clearly articulate your differentiators and repeat consistently—on packaging, through marketing, and on your social profiles and website. Bare Snacks, a former client of ours, is a great example. It entered the snackable produce space, which was full of decent choices mixed in with a healthy dose of fried poofs, pillows and other Frankenfoods. Bare helped establish snackable produce as a real snacking category, claiming real estate on store shelves.

Another brand that brings this thinking to life for me is The Good Crisp Company. Starting with a riff on Pringles and innovating with a twist on other snacking favorites, the brand is successfully building off iconic favorites by adding heightened nutritional benefits to modernize a successful concept. From my perspective, it's working!

### **Too broad, or too vague**

We often see two types of clients: those who want to appeal to a mainstream audience and those who target a niche so refined it alienates consumers who might be open to trying new products. We recommend defining a target audience that's both clearly articulated but also inclusive.

A great example is the Keto trend that became hot several years ago. A number of brands hoping to capture this passionate audience included the word Keto in their names and branding. A great move if you want to attract a Keto-only audience, but not realistic for longevity when we know that dietary trends tend to peak and fizzle out over time.

That said, we also take pause when a brand positions itself as a solution for everyone, because it makes it challenging to develop messaging that isolates a key point of difference.

### **One and done, or a slow drip**

An interesting trend we've seen when talking to prospective clients this year is a pivot from long-term growth marketing to short-term stunts and spurts to drive growth. This stems from a desire to ensure efficient spending, which sounds great but can lack strategy, particularly for emerging brands. While ROI and maximizing returns are important,

campaigns and stunts can be short-sighted as they are here and gone in a flash and you miss the opportunity for ongoing, day-in and day-out awareness and brand building.

When it comes to your marketing and PR strategies, we recommend you think like a money manager. Good money managers talk about long-game strategies with conservative portfolios and investment in tried-and-true players to create wealth, so when you retire you can spend your remaining years on the golf course or cruising the high sea. They don't recommend trying to hand-pick a hot stock in the hopes of winning big. The same is true with marketing. It's critical to create household recognition for your brand with a consistent and sustained strategy rather than trying to garner consumer interest with a one-and-done news stunt.

### **Embrace, don't alienate**

Always lead with a positive message with your marketing, even if you're solving for a negative issue. The last thing your marketing strategy should do is shame your target consumer. It should empower. Food is a joyful experience, so make your message one that gets consumers excited and inspired.

The sober-curious movement has done a fantastic job of attracting Gen Zers with this strategy. Rather than gain acceptance by scaring people, supporters have made the effort inclusive via varying levels of participation°. They celebrate stories of how much better life can be by going alcohol-free, or simply just drinking less.

### **Make marketing pay nice**

Every component of your business strategy needs to play together in the same sandbox. For example, PR is interested in driving big media hits while your social team wants to see lots of engagement. Building programs that align with each of these initiatives can amplify a program's success.

### **Don't lead with impact, follow with impact**

Many brands seek to differentiate by elevating their sustainability and impact initiatives, which is fantastic in a world where consumers want to create impact through their purchasing decisions. But that message needs to be secondary to taste and experience. Brands need to validate a consumer's decision to eat delicious food with a support message of the impact that decision has on planetary wellness.

The future is ripe for disruption and the CPG industry plays a key societal role. After all, everyone needs to eat to survive. Our job is to make sure we eat to thrive!

*Rachel Kay is Managing Partner at [FINN Partners](#).*

## **INTELLIGENT GROUP IR FIRM LISTS ON NASDAQ**

Intelligent Group Ltd, a Hong Kong-based financial PR firm, has priced its initial public offering of 1.9M shares at \$4, which is the low end of the \$4 to \$5 range.

The \$6.2M in net proceeds will be earmarked for development and commercialization of new technologies and for general corporate purposes.

Intelligent Group's financial services include arranging special events/press conferences, investor outreach, media relations/training, and crisis management.



The firm has targeted the US market for expansion.

The IPO comes as China has rolled out a stringent security law in Hong Kong to stifle dissent.

The vague wording of so-called Article 23 could pose a threat to multinationals operating in the former British colony. Intelligent Group's shares will trade under the INTJ symbol.

## **BLUE STAR GUIDES VZ OPPOSITION PARTY**

Blue Star Strategies is working to boost the US visibility of a Venezuelan opposition political party ahead of the July 28 presidential elections.



It was hired by a Miami-based nonprofit group called Emprendamo to highlight the political objectives of ProCiudadanos, which was founded by journalist and activist Leocenis Garcia. The 44-year-old has been jailed six times during the presidential terms of Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro.

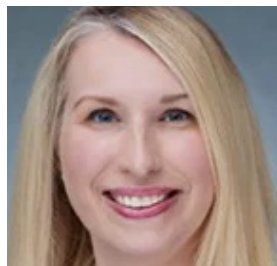
Blue Star Strategies has a one-year pact to conduct outreach to members of Congress and the executive branch to arrange meetings for those interested in meeting Garcia to learn about the goals of ProCiudadanos.

The contract, which went into effect March 1, carries a \$15K monthly retainer.

Blue Star was co-founded by former Clinton White House staffers Karen Tramontano and Sally Painter.

## **GOLIN HEALTH HIRES PATTON**

Erin Patton joins Golin Health, Golin's specialized health-care communications practice, as EVP, associate managing director.



**Erin Patton**

Patton was most recently director, corporate affairs at biotech research company Seagen Inc., handling communications on oncology drug discovery and development, precision medicines and the impact of policies on innovation in these areas. She was previously San Francisco healthcare practice lead at [Weber Shandwick](#).

In her newly created role, Patton will support the entire U.S. operation with a primary focus on growth, client service, innovations and talent development.

"Erin brings an extensive background in life sciences and health communications, with the ability to help clients navigate increasingly complex data, regulatory and policy challenges," said Jaimee Reggio, who was recently named U.S. managing director, Golin Health and Virgo Health.

## **160OVER90 BRINGS ON BEST**

160over90, the cultural marketing agency that is part of Endeavor, appoints Lauren Best as VP in its public relations and communications vertical.



**Lauren Best**

Best was previously director of international markets at Mastercard. She also served as chief marketing & communications officer at Marylebone Cricket Club and head of public relations, content and social media at the Lawn Tennis Association. Best will lead the agency's work for multinational logistics company DP World account as well

as supporting 160over90's business development efforts.

"Lauren's deep communications and integrated marketing expertise combined with her in house experience will bring substantial value to our clients," said Victoria Biggs, who co-leads the agency's global PR team.

## **PORT OF DUBLIN FLOATS PR/MARKETING RFP**

The Port of Dublin, which handles 50 percent of Ireland's total trade and 80 percent of its containerized traffic, wants a PR/marketing services firm to position it as an essential state asset.

It aims to be "appreciated at a national and an individual level, a competent, modern, and innovative operation but also one that is connected to its community and respectful of its rich heritage and environment," according to the RFP.

Steeped in more than 300 years of history, Dublin Port is a major contributor to local activities and sponsorships of sporting clubs and educational institutions.

Its plans beyond shipping include extensive walking/cycling paths, new sports fields, and a large maritime village.

Dublin Port Company plans to issue a one-year contract with options to extend for another four years.

The first year budget will fall in the \$325K range, while overall spending for the five-year period will be in the \$1.6M to \$2.7M bracket.

Responses are due April 5. They go to [Ireland's e-portal](#). [Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).



## **EVENTS: NYWIC SLATES MATRIX AWARDS**

[The New York Women in Communications](#) are honoring an accomplished group of female communications professionals at the 54th Annual Matrix Awards, which will be held on Tuesday, May 21 at the Ziegfeld Ballroom in Manhattan. This year's awards celebrate the careers of a group of "Rule Breakers" that includes Emmy- and Tony-award-winning actress Kristin Chenoweth, H&R Block chief marketing & experience officer Jill Cress, New York Times Co. president and CEO Meredith Kopit Levien, Citi global head of communications Jennifer Lowney, BBDO CEO of the Americas Nancy Reyes and Skai Blue Media founder/executive officer Rakia Reynolds. To learn more, register, donate or explore sponsorship opportunities, please visit [NYWICI.org](#).



[The USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations](#) is placing the spotlight on purpose-driven communications at "[The Balancing Act, Purpose, Politics and Polarization](#)," its 34th Kenneth Owler Smith Symposium. At the Thursday, April 4 event, a panel moderated by Weber Shandwick CEO Gail Heimann will also talk about how corporations (and clients) need to strike a balance between addressing important social issues and protecting their brands from ideology-based attacks. The 6 p.m. event will be followed by a Q&A session and a livestream will be available.

[The Knight Center for Journalism in America](#) is sponsoring [The 25th International Symposium on Online Journalism \(ISOJ\)](#). The April 12-13 event, held online as well as in person at the University of Texas at Austin, will bring together journalists, media executives and scholars from around the world to discuss the impact that digital technology has had on journalism. Keynote speakers will include Galina Timchenko, the co-founder, CEO and publisher of Meduza — the largest remaining independent Russian news outlet published in both Russian and English.

## **DONHAUSER TO LEAD H/ADVISORS IN SF**

Tod Donhauser, a nine-year veteran of Edelman, has joined [H/Advisors Abernathy](#) as managing director and head of its San Francisco office.



**Tod Donhauser**

He was [Edelman](#)'s head of client strategy & deputy general manager for the Bay Area after stints as CEO in the Middle East, and managing director of South Africa.

Donhauser exited Edelman for the global marketing director for trust post at Google Search, and then ran his own firm for five years.

He has worked with clients in [technology](#), [healthcare](#), consumer and [financial](#) services.

Tom Johnson, H/Advisors Abernathy CEO, said Donhauser's "track record counseling clients on complex reputation matters and devising communications strategies to navigate a highly dynamic regulatory environment will be an asset to our firm and to our clients on the West Coast and beyond."

H/Advisors Abernathy also named managing director Sheila Ennis to the newly created head of investor relations position. She joined the firm in 2016 from ICR Inc., where she was senior VP.

H/Advisors Abernathy is part of France's Havas.

## **EX-HALEY PRESS SEC JOINS PLUS COMMS**

Ken Farnaso, who was press secretary for Nikki Haley's presidential campaign, has joined PLUS Communications as director in its public affairs group.



**Ken Farnaso**

Prior to joining Haley's staff, Farnaso was press secretary for SC Senator Tim Scott, and deputy national press secretary for Donald Trump's 2020 re-election campaign.

Omnicom acquired Plus Communications last September.

Plus provides corporate, crisis communications, coalition building, grassroots mobilization, digital

engagement and media relations services.

It is based in Arlington, VA with regional offices in Richmond and Austin.

## **AR SEEKS PR TO PROMOTE SOYBEANS**

The Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board is looking to hire a PR firm to educate the public about its activities and the health benefits associated with the "miracle bean."

The Natural State ranks No. 11 among the US states producing soybeans, which are primarily used for cattle feed. Soybeans are also used in tofu, candy, soy milk, soy sauce, and antibiotics.



Many food companies use soy as a high-quality protein source with little saturated fat. The American Heart Association has recognized soyfoods for their role in a heart-healthy diet.

ASPB's PR partner also is to encourage interest among young people about careers in soybean agriculture.

The board will issue a one-year contract with options to renew for six additional one-year periods.

Proposals are due April 3 at [Arkansas' e-portal](#).

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

## **NEWS OF FIRMS**

[Hemsworth](#) is chosen as United States agency representative for latamPR, a network of Latin America-based strategic communications agencies. Heading up the Hemsworth-latamPR relationship will be Hemsworth founder and president Samantha Jacobs, VP Cathy Angel and associate VP Kayla Atwater. The new relationship will give Hemsworth clients access to a network of multilingual communications strategists and A-list media in top Latin America markets. In addition, Latin American brands working with a latamPR members will now be able to tap into Hemsworth's extensive media connections in top U.S. markets.



**McGuffin Creative Group**, a Chicago-based marketing and advertising agency, opens applications for its 2024 McGuffin Grant. Launched in 2011, the grant gives one 501(c)(3) nonprofit recipient per year access to the expertise and guidance of the McGuffin team, totaling \$30,000 in work. The scope of the work is defined by the client's needs and goals. An online application for the grant is available at [mcguffincg.com/grant](#) and must be submitted by April 15 at 11:59pm CT.

Content marketing agency **Manifest** is acquired by **ARS Advertising**. Manifest will continue to operate independently under its existing brand, with CEO Melissa Bouma remaining in her position and reporting to ARS chief executive officer Ross Shelleman. "Harnessing the power of both scale and range will fuel creativity while driving efficiencies across the two companies," said Bouma.

**Morrow Sodali** launches a research practice for the EMEA region. The new division, based in London, will be led by Claire Lavery, who established and grew Rivel, Inc.'s European business over the last 12 years. Morrow Sodali's EMEA research practice will principally focus on stakeholder perception research, providing actionable and meaningful insights for clients across the region, and topical thought leader, market driven research.



**Claire Lavery**

**Maverick Public Relations**, which specializes in the sustainable technology, clean energy, biotech, agribusiness, and cannabis sectors, establishes a New York City office, which will be led by agency VP of media & influencer relations Bree DeVita. Headquartered in Denver, Maverick also has offices in Los Angeles, Miami, Nevada, Europe, and Mexico. The expansion to New York aims to support current media partnerships while implementing future planned initiatives. DeVita will focus on fostering journalist relationships, engaging key influencers and serving as Maverick's representative at events.

**Voxus PR**, a B2B technology marketing agency, expands its content creation services. The new services, which are intended to give technology brands the differentiated content needed to drive narratives across earned, owned and paid media, cover standalone assets and turnkey packaged programs. Offerings include content audits and gap assessments, competitive content analysis, messaging, contributed and sponsored content, eBooks, videos, surveys and reports, case studies, blogs, product briefs, website copy and sales playbooks.

## COMMENTARY

**What was it thinking?** The Dwight D. Opperman Foundation, which administers the Ruth Bader Ginsburg legacy award, has cancelled its April 13 gala at the Library of Congress.



The cancellation comes after the family of the late Supreme Court justice blasted this year's intended honorees, and demanded that her name be removed from the award.

Ginsburg, a feminist and liberal icon, helped establish the award to recognize women of distinction.

Having other ideas, the Foundation expanded the award this year to include men who have changed the world by doing what they do best."

It pitched the addition of men to adhere to Ginsburg's teachings about equality. Politics was not considered.

On March 13, it announced its 2024 slate of nominees. It included former Fox News/News Corp. chief Rupert Murdoch, one-time junk bond king and now philanthropist Michael Milken, Tesla/Space X/Boring Co/X chief Elon Musk, actor Sylvester Stallone and jack-of-all trades Martha Stewart.

The Opperman press release included a quote from each of the intended winners.

Murdoch said: "This recognition not only reflects my journey in the media and publishing industry but also represents the relentless defense of civil liberties and a commitment to civil discourse that Justice Ginsburg embodied."

The Ginsburgs aren't buying it.

Jane Ginsburg, Columbia Law School professor, said in a family statement that the Opperman Foundation "strayed far from the original award" and from what her mother stood for.

A past winner, Barbra Streisand, also condemned the choice of this year's honorees. "I had the privilege of meeting Justice Ginsburg on several occasions, and I strongly doubt she would approve of these awardees," she posted on X.

[The Foundation has thrown in the towel.](#) It now plans to reconsider its mission over the next few months and decide how and whether to proceed in the future.

It has taken down its website, which is currently under revision. The site promises to be back shortly.

**Shohei Ohtani, a two-way player hailed as baseball's next Babe Ruth,** might want to rejigger his \$700M contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers following news that he may be the victim of a "massive theft" by his friend and interpreter.

The *Los Angeles Times* broke the story that Ipei Mizuhara used millions of Ohtani's cash to pay off a gambling debt that was owed to a bookie, who is under federal investigation.

Mizuhara claims he asked Ohtani to pay off his debt and he reluctantly agreed. Apparently, no bets were made on baseball games.

The news put a huge damper on Major League Baseball's much ballyhooed opening day splash in South Korea, where the Dodgers and Padres split a two-game series.

Before the Dodgers second game in Seoul, the media peppered Dodger manager Dave Roberts with questions about

the gambling story involving his star player.

Ohtani's contract calls for \$680M of his contract to be deferred until the pact expires in 2033. Depending on his exposure to Mizuhara's gambling activities, he may require more up-front cash.

It's not a good PR look to have the money earned by the biggest baseball star on the planet paying off a bookie.

Just ask Pete Rose, who is MLB's all time leader in hits, about why he isn't enshrined in Baseball's Hall of Fame.

**And the winner is... Australia.** "The Land Down Under" won the 2023 "best country brand" award from Madrid-based MARCO integrated communications shop.

The jury cited Australia for its business and tourism savvy and overall standing on the world stage.

Singapore (Asia/Middle East), the US (Americas), Switzerland/Sweden (Europe) and South Africa (Africa) took top honors in regional break-outs in the "doing business" category.

On the tourism front: Australia (Asia/Middle East/Oceania), Peru and Costa Rica (Americas), Spain (Europe) and South Africa (Africa) took top honors.

Didier Lagae, founder and executive chairman of MARCO, was previously deputy GM at Edelman, head of reputation management in the EMEA for Weber Shandwick, and global head of global communications at The Body Shop.

**Minneapolis is looking for a firm** to design [a hyper-focused advertising ad campaign](#) to warn young East African and Native American residents about the dangers of opioids

A key focus will be the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, an area known as "Little Somalia." It also is home to many Ethiopians and Eritreans.

African Americans are 3 times more likely to die of an overdose than a white person. Native Americans are 10 times more likely to die of an overdose than a white person.

Youth (ages 10 to 19) overdose deaths in Minnesota surged 109 percent from 2019 to 2021.

**No news is bad news for PR...** Pundits used to say that people moved from traditional newspaper and TV outlets to social media for their news fix. But that's not really the case, wrote *Financial Times* [columnist Simon Kuper](#).

He notes that Meta reports news accounts form less than three percent on its Facebook platform.

The majority of people find news, depressing, boring and repetitive. Kuper wrote: "If the Biden-Trump contest were a reality TV show, it would have been discontinued in 2020."

Only spectacular news videos (Ukraine invasion, Gaza/Hamas war, Mexico/US border standoff) capture people's attention, but that interest wanes after a certain amount of time.

Kuper predicts a few serious media outlets (e.g., FT) will survive as special-interest publications, like ham-radio magazines in bygone days.

As people lose interest in tracking the news, it becomes easier for leaders like Viktor Orban to dismantle democracy.

America may struggle to save its democracy in the event that Donald Trump returns to office. —Kevin McCauley