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Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's

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## **BOSTON ISSUES DRUG PREVENTION RFP**

The Boston Public Health Commission, the local public health department for the City of Boston, is seeking a media agency that can develop marketing materials for a substance use prevention campaign.

Boston's Recovery Services Bureau, in collaboration with BPHC's Division of Violence Prevention's Capacity Building and Training Initiative, is requesting proposals from marketing agencies that can expand upon an existing prevention campaign and also implement a public awareness media campaign and other activities in an effort to curb rising youth substance abuse.



Scope of the work includes developing stories to reflect stressors and coping mechanisms of youth based on information supplied by the Community Prevention Office; web design; developing and implementing media assets for a social media strategy; and improving existing designs of outreach materials for the Recovery Services Bureau.

Terms of the contract run through June 30, 2021.

Submissions are due by 5:00 PM (EST) on Friday, April 9, and should be emailed to [Procurement@bphc.org](mailto:Procurement@bphc.org).

All emailed submissions should contain the subject line: "RFP For Evaluation Consultant for The Capacity Building and Training Initiative."

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

## **BALLARD LANDS BOSTON POL O'FLAHERTY**

Ballard Partners, which flourished during the Trump administration, has recruited Eugene O'Flaherty, who was corporate counsel for the City of Boston, for its DC office.

O'Flaherty has close ties with Boston's Mayor Marty Walsh, who was just confirmed as Secretary of Labor. He also served in the Bay State's House of Representatives for 17 years and helmed its Judiciary Committee.



**Eugene O'Flaherty**

O'Flaherty was the leader in the push to make Massachusetts the first state to legalize gay marriage and was responsible for stronger sex offender and human trafficking measures, as well as the overhaul of its impaired driving statutes.

Brian Ballard, who chaired Donald Trump's fundraising effort in Florida, said O'Flaherty's Boston's connections and knowledge of the Massachusetts Congressional delegation expands his firm's reach and capabilities.

## **SORRELL TAKES A BOW AT S4 CAPITAL**

S4 Capital chalked up an "outstandingly successful" performance during its second full year of operation, according to founder Martin Sorrell, as like-for-like revenues jumped 15.2 percent to \$475M and operating income hit \$11.1M compared to a year-earlier \$5.2M loss.

Sorrell said the "creativity, adaptability, resilience and hard work" of S4's employees proved the "potency of our new age/era, digital, data-driven, unitary model."

S4's plan to "double organically" every three years is off to a good start in 2021. Goals for 2021 are to "bed down" S4's two "whoppers" (e.g., clients with more than \$20M in annual spending) and identify five more; roll out binary branding, and broaden and deeper digital offerings.



**Martin Sorrell**

## **HOLLY STRATEGIES PUSHES EGYPT-US TIES**

Holly Strategies is providing government relations services to Egypt as subcontractor to Brown Hyatt Farber Schreck.

It has a one-year deal worth \$120K to promote the interests of the Arab Republic of Egypt and strengthen its relationships with the US via outreach to American officials and non-governmental entities.

Josh Holly launched Holly Strategies in December 2017 following the implosion of The Podesta Group, where he did a six-year stint.

His firm also represents Iraq's US embassy.

## **HARRY & MEGHAN'S COS EXITS**

Catherine St-Laurent, who last year took the chief of staff job for Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, has stepped down, according to *The Telegraph*.

She is transitioning to an "advisory role" and will be replaced by James Holt, who is UK head of engagement & communications for the couple.

St.-Laurent previously had a three-year run as senior communications officer for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

St-Laurent also was executive director of Harry & Meghan's Archewell Foundation.



**Catherine St-Laurent**

## **SALEM SEEKS DESTINATION MARKETING**

Salem, Oregon's capital city of 170K people, is looking for a firm to handle its \$2M annual destination marketing program.



The city is 47 miles south of Portland and an hour from ocean beaches and the Cascade Mountains.

Salem has enjoyed steady growth, offers abundant land for development and boasts a "ready and willing workforce."

It wants a PR partner to improve the city's local, regional and national image in a manner that utilizes local citizens, businesses, civic organizations, government and others to promote the city.

The firm will handle general tourism marketing and work to lure conventions, seminars and sporting events to the city.

The destination marketing contract will run for five years, beginning in September. There is a potential for a five-year renewal.

Proposals are due April 5. They must be submitted to the equity hub's bid locker at [https://bidlockcer.us/a/salem\\_or/BidLocker](https://bidlockcer.us/a/salem_or/BidLocker).

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

## **EX-NYPD REP ARRESTED OVER CAPITOL RAID**

Sara Carpenter, a former spokesperson for the New York City police department, was arrested March 23 for participating in the Jan. 6 storming of the US Capitol.

Surveillance footage caught Carpenter inside the Capitol shaking a tambourine and shooting video, according to the [New York Daily News](#).

A tipster ratted Carpenter out to the FBI, saying she told a relative that she took part in the riot.

During an interview with the FBI, Carpenter admitted being in the Capitol and handed over her video.

The 51-year-old Carpenter, who is retired from the NYPD, was charged with entering a restricted area and disrupting the conduct of government business. She appeared in Brooklyn federal court and was released on bail.

"Any involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the Capitol is serious criminal conduct," said assistant U.S. attorney Joshua Hafetz at the arraignment. "That said... Her cooperation to date with the investigation, including her self-surrender today... are sufficient to ensure her return to court."

## **DOW JONES' CERNEY NAMED AFINITI CCO**

Natalie Cerny, who was chief communications officer at News Corp.'s Dow Jones unit, has joined Afinity as its CCO.

She's in charge of media relations, external/internal PR, content creation and digital strategy.



**Natalie Cerny**

Cerny also headed global PR for REA Group, publicly traded digital real estate company, and managed PR for the Australian Grand Prix Corp.

Zia Chishti, Afinity CEO, hailed Cerny as "among the most effective communications executives in the world."

Cerny is based in the Hamilton, Bermuda headquarters of the data and software company that has developed artificial intelligence systems for use in customer call centers.

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

**PHG Consulting** picks up **Honduran Institute of Tourism**. PHG Consulting will focus on commercializing the country's tourism experiences for the North American market through travel trade, media relations, social media and sustainable tourism consulting managed by sister company, Beyond Green Travel.

"Honduras has tremendous potential to generate interest as a desirable tourism destination within the North American market," said Santiago Gonzalez Abreu, Vice President of Development & Marketing for PHG Consulting.

**Manifest** promotes **World Childhood Foundation USA**, a United Nations-accredited NGO founded by H.M. Queen Silvia of Sweden. The agency will support the foundation's mission to end child sexual abuse, exploitation and violence. Manifest's remit covers social media development and activation, as well as unified campaigns.

**23red** adds 2021 marketing and communication strategy for the **Open University**, the largest university in the UK for undergraduate education. The agency will help integrate the Open University's B2B and B2C communications to attract more students and employer partners. Its strategy will target all four parts of the UK and showcase the Open University's credentials as the pioneer of flexible and blended online learning.

**Conran Design Group**, Havas' branding agency, is executing the new visual identity for **Reckitt Benckiser**, which will now be known as Reckitt. The company says that its new brand identity and iconography, which are rolling out across all of its touchpoints and platforms, are intended to focus attention on the company's purpose and transformation. In addition to the name change, the rebrand includes a new logo and color palette, as well as a typeface designed specifically for the company.

**Clarity** takes on marketing and PR agency-of-record duties for **Mirza**, a platform geared toward helping individuals better plan their family finances and lifestyles, as well as corporate users who can adopt its technology for HR departments, with the goal of breaking down the gender pay gap. Clarity will be working on PR, influencer management, and paid social marketing focused on driving awareness and signups to Mirza's tools across the US and UK markets.

**Hill+Knowlton Strategies** is named European communications and advocacy agency for **Global Blood Therapeutics**, a biopharmaceutical company focused on innovating treatments for underserved patient communities, starting with sickle cell disease. H+K will support GBT in key markets, including the UK, Germany and France. H+K's remit will include building the corporate story as well as product communications, patient advocacy and internal communications. Based in the USA, GBT was founded in 2011 and is currently launching its first product, Oxbryta® (Voxelotor) tablets, a first-in-class treatment for SCD that was approved by the U.S. FDA in November 2019.



## COVID-19 AND THE PARADOX OF 'FULFILLMENT'

Fulfillment. It's more than a satisfying feeling experienced by consumers as they receive their purchases. Fulfillment is the complex matrix of the storage, compilation, packaging, shipping and delivery of goods. Understanding it is like evolving from a person who likes road trips into someone who can speak to every nuance of a car's engine. Perhaps this is why the paradox of "fulfillment" is one of the most unexpected lessons of this past pandemic year.



**Kristen Ingraham**

It took COVID-19 to open the eyes of the world to the intricacies of the fulfillment universe and interconnection of logistics. Consider how aware we now are of COVID-19 vaccine distribution hurdles—the tiny delivery window; the unprecedented demand for refrigeration and freezer capacity; the limited shelf life. It's a delicate balance to be sure.

But is it really that different from our global food distribution needs? Why has it taken a pandemic to unveil to us the step-by-step processes that put goods in our hands and homes?

For a start, we are no longer just "end consumers" waiting to simply feel fulfilled. We want insight into every step of our consumer food journey and our demands are enormous and endless. For brands and companies, meeting these demands is a like a game of Jenga, where one wrong move topples the tower and game over.

So, what do brands and companies need to understand, to navigate both consumer and logistical fulfillment, and its impact on their bottom line?

**Shipping costs:** Consumers will no longer accept the burden of high-priced shipping costs. That burden now rests solely on brands if they want to succeed. According to a recent report by the National Retail Foundation, 75 percent of consumers expect delivery to be free even on orders under \$50.

**Micro-fulfillment:** Innovative, scalable solutions—like the new, North American jointmarket offering for end-to-end eGrocery Management Solutions, from Attabotics and FoodX Technologies—can provide retailers with a turn-key, flexible solution for automated micro-fulfillment of fresh food.

**"Big-box" booming distribution center growth:** For every new micro-fulfillment center footprint, there remains a larger big-box store distribution center location to counter it. Unlike many other segments of the economy, warehouse and DC development is not only withstanding the widespread economic impact of COVID-19, it's thriving.

**Third-party logistics are here to stay:** The vastly accelerated growth of digital commerce has many businesses embracing digital storefronts for the first time and seeking outside logistical support for order fulfillment. Third-party logistics companies have expanded their ecommerce and fulfillment capabilities to keep up.

**Even convenience is open to consumer backlash:** Don't shoot the messenger, but feel free to blame them for taking their cut of the profits. Consumers are fiercely loyal to their favorite food companies and increasingly aware of the financial burden food brands assume by engaging third-party fulfillment partners. According to the *Washington Post*, restaurant delivery fulfillment by companies like DoorDash and GrubHub, means they collect anywhere between 10 percent and 30 percent of each order in fees. And customers do not like it.

Consider the resounding backlash to the recent Uber Eats and DoorDash Super Bowl commercials that touted the brands' support for neighborhood restaurants and local businesses. Patrick Radden Keefe, a James Beard Award-nominated staff writer for the *New Yorker* tweeted: "The idea that Uber Eats, a parasitic app, has just rolled out the new tag phrase 'Eat Local, Support Local' gives even my cynicism a run for its money."

Ouch. But such is the paradox of "fulfillment."

*Kristen Ingraham is a Senior Vice President at Padilla. She leads the agency's Food + Beverage Practice.*

## PR IN THE AGE OF CANNABIS

First round of investment funds is secured (check). A Research & Development Lab opened (check). Management team is formed (check). The PR Newswire releases start churning (check). Companies are overvalued and profits are a dream in the future (check). Sound familiar? Welcome to the next tech boom. The cannabis frontier has arrived and it's impossible to ignore.

Why? The numbers speak volumes:

- In 2016, legal cannabis sales totaled \$6 billion; in 2026 that number is expected to increase to \$50 billion.
- Cannabis became an attractive option for people spending more time at home, both for entertainment and to reduce stress and anxiety. The cherry on top: Cannabis was designated an essential business at the start of COVID-19, helping the industry thrive this year.



**Lori Rosen**

- Almost 70 percent of Americans fully support the full legalization of cannabis and with local and state tax coffers depleted, more and more states will go green. Just look at California, which is expected to pull in \$6 billion in sales in 2021 alone, followed by Colorado (\$1.8B), Florida (\$1.8B in medical only), Illinois (\$1.7B), Michigan (\$1.5B), and Massachusetts (\$1.4B).

• South of the border, Mexico will soon be the third country in the world to legalize recreational cannabis, while all eyes are on the European cannabis market.

• CBD products, once considered a niche product, have moved into the mainstream and can be found in skincare, makeup and a long list of consumer packaged goods.

So, what can PR professionals do to leverage this market in a sane and sustainable way?

**Do your due diligence** and make sure the cannabis companies that you are speaking to have cash flow, a path to profitability, and a strong internal regulatory framework. There is no room in the cannabis supply chain for errors.

**Make sure your social media adheres to the guidelines.** Until cannabis is federally legal, Facebook and Instagram will not let you post about your product. It's a fact. Sooner or later your client will be shut down and their social footprint will go poof if you're not careful.

**Don't let your cannabis clients become a commodity.** Wait for the right opportunities, staff accordingly, and execute campaigns with the same holistic view as other sectors.

Cannabis is budding, but there are still hurdles and stigmas when it comes to telling its story. If we shape a strong narrative and play our cards right, the green rush can be beneficial for us all.

*Lori Rosen is president at Rosen Group.*

## **LACK OF RESEARCH FUELS FAKE NEWS**

Many Americans who share misinformation on social media sites do so simply because they don't conduct the necessary research to verify whether or not that content is accurate, [according to a study](#) conducted by a collaboration of researchers from MIT, Canada's University of Regina, the University of Exeter Business School in England and Mexico's Center for Research and Teaching in Economics.



Researchers determined that Americans might circulate so much fake news not because they deliberately want to misinform others nor because they can't separate accurate content from content that's false. Instead, there seems to be a disconnect between what Americans believe to be true and what they share with others.

In one study, researchers recruited about 1,000 participants and presented them with a series of news story headlines. Half of the headlines were true and the other half were false. Asked whether or not they thought the headlines were accurate, survey participants overwhelmingly rated the true headlines as accurate more often than the false headlines.

But when it came to whether participants would consider sharing these headlines with others on social media, researchers discovered those intentions to be much less discerning. Despite an overall desire to share only accurate content, partisan alignment was found to be a significantly stronger predictor of whether a story would be shared than a headline's veracity.

So, what's behind the disconnect? The study found that being merely distracted may play a central role in social media users' sharing intentions.

In another experiment, participants were asked to assess the accuracy of a headline before deciding whether or not they would share it. When a false headline was chosen to be shared, the study found that more than half of participants who did so (51.2 percent) blamed a lack of attention. A third (33.1 percent) chalked up the mistake to simply not realizing the headline was inaccurate. Only 15.8 percent admitted that some personal preference—such as partisanship—was behind their decisions to deliberately share a false headline.

In other words, the study suggests that most people's beliefs may not be as partisan as their social media feeds indicate, and that prompting social media users to instead think critically about the accuracy of what they post might improve the quality of the content they share.

"Our results suggest that the current design of social media platforms—in which users scroll quickly through a mixture of serious news and emotionally engaging content, and receive instantaneous quantified social feedback on their sharing—may discourage people from reflecting on accuracy," the study's authors conclude. "But this need not be the case. Our treatment translates easily into interventions that social media platforms could use to increase users' focus on accuracy. For example, platforms could periodically ask users to rate the accuracy of randomly selected headlines, thus reminding them about accuracy in a subtle way that should avoid reactance (and simultaneously generating useful crowd ratings that can help to identify misinformation)."

The study, "Shifting attention to accuracy can reduce misinformation online," was published in science journal *Nature*. Respondents were sourced through Amazon's crowd-sourcing service MTurk.

—Jon Gingerich

## **HARMONY SCHOOLS RECRUIT PR FIRM**

Harmony Public Schools, a system of 58 Texas public charter schools, is looking for a firm to handle its PR.

Harmony says it provides a rigorous, high-quality science, technology, engineering and math-focused curriculum taught in a caring and collaborative environment to students from traditionally underserved communities.

More than half (52 percent) of Harmony's more than 36K students are Hispanic. Twenty percent are Black, 15 percent are White, and 13 percent are Asian-American.

The desired firm will handle strategic messaging, media relations, digital and social media, chief communications officer support, strategic industry partnerships and thought leadership.

Harmony will issue a one-year contract with options to renew for four additional one-year periods.

Proposals are due April 2 and go to <https://harmonytx.ionwave.net/Login.aspx>.

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



## **GLADSTONE PLACE PREPS WEWORK IPO**

[Gladstone Place Partners](#) represents WeWork as it inks a SPAC deal with BowX Acquisition Corp to pave the way for the flexible space provider to go public.

The deal puts \$9B enterprise valuation on WeWork and provide it with \$1.3B to fund future growth plans.

WeWork CEO Sandeep Mathrani said WeWork spent pandemic year 2020 "transforming the business and refocusing its core" and the COVID-19 outbreak-flexible work schedules proved that its value proposition is stronger than ever.

During 2020, WeWork slashed SGA expenses by \$1.1B, exited non-core businesses, exited from underperforming locations, achieved rent reductions, and sliced 67 percent of its workforce. It posted a flat \$3.2B revenues for the year.

WeWork has more 850 locations in 150 cities, totaling more than 1M workstations.

Gladstone Place's Lauren Odell and Felipe Ucros handle WeWork's deal.

## **FORMER C&W NA PREXY EDER TO MMI**

Laura Pesin Eder, who was president, North America at Cohn & Wolfe through the merger that created [BCW Global](#), has joined Houston-based MMI Agency as executive vice president, communications and operations.

Most recently, Eder has run her own firm, LPE Communications Consulting, which works with agencies on such issues as leadership development, team design and infrastructure optimization. She is also co-founder and COO of Upleaf'd, a subscription-box club that delivers cannabis-related products to women.

Eder has also served as an executive VP at [Edelman](#) and president & COO at DeVries Global.

At MMI, she will be focused on communications at large, on behalf of clients and the agency itself, as well as optimizing the infrastructure of the organization, including team design, training and culture-building.



Linda Pesin Eder

## **NH PITCHES \$200K TRAVEL/TOURISM PACT**

New Hampshire is looking for a PR firm to help attract visitors to the Granite State in an effort to bolster its \$5.6B travel and tourism business, which employs about 50K people.

The firm, which will handle US and Canadian PR, will increase brand awareness among consumer audiences, handle press trips, secure “top-tier” media coverage of the annual receptions in Boston and New York; conduct outreach in the Toronto and Montreal markets, handle special events and develop a digital influencer strategy.

The multi-channel campaign must fit New Hampshire’s overall brand platform and marketing program.

The RFP is from the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs’ travel and tourism unit.

It offers a two-year contract, which begins July 1, with a budget capped at \$200K per-annum. There is an option to renew through June 2025.

Proposals are due April 15. They go to Amy Bassett, deputy director, at [Amy.O.Bassett@livefree.nh.gov](mailto:Amy.O.Bassett@livefree.nh.gov).

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

## **GROUP LOBBIES FOR PUERTO RICO**

The Puerto Rico Statehood Council has retained government relations firm Michael Best Strategies in an effort to resolve Puerto Rico’s territorial status.

The Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit focuses on public policy and advocacy in support of admitting Puerto Rico into the United States Union. It has hired MBS to lobby Washington on “issues regarding Puerto Rico statehood legislation,” according to lobbying registration documents filed with Congress in March.

The retainer comes amid several recent developments in the years-long debate regarding whether or not to grant Puerto Rico statehood status, a move, supporters argue, which would give citizens of the U.S. territory voting representation in Congress, the ability to vote for President and equal access to federal programs.



In March, Rep. Darren Soto (D-FL), and Rep. Jennifer Gonzalez (R-PR), introduced the “Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act,” which would admit the island territory as a U.S. state. Similar versions of that bill have unsuccessfully been introduced in Congress for several years.

While Puerto Ricans are divided on the issue, 52 percent of the territory’s residents in November voted in favor of a nonbinding referendum seeking statehood, authorizing Puerto Rico governor Pedro Pierluisi to appoint a commission representing the territory in negotiations related to that goal.

Many Republican lawmakers, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), oppose the move—as well as similar recent attempts to recognize Washington D.C. as a state—which would give Democrats an electoral advantage.

MBS principal Alexander Angelson handles the Puerto Rico Statehood Council account. He previously served in the White House Office of Legislative Affairs as special assistant to President Trump. Prior to that, he was special assistant to the chairman of the Republican National Committee.

## **DOMINION FILES \$1.6B SUIT VS. FOX, MURDOCH**

Dominion Voting Systems has filed a \$1.6B defamation suit against Fox News and owner Rupert Murdoch over the network’s coverage of the 2020 presidential election. It follows a February \$2.7B defamation suit by Smartmatic, another voting systems company.

Filed in Delaware Superior Court, Dominion’s suit claims that Fox “endorsed, repeated, and broadcast a series of verifiably false yet devastating lies about Dominion.”

Dominion, which is requesting a jury trial, alleges that broadcasts by Fox included reports that Dominion committed election fraud by rigging the 2020 presidential election, that its software and algorithms manipulated vote counts in the election, and that it paid kickbacks to government officials who used its machines in the 2020 Presidential Election were lies.

The lawsuit claims that Fox knew the statements about Dominion were lies, and that “the vote tallies from Dominion machines could easily be confirmed by independent audits and hand recounts of paper ballots, as has been done repeatedly since the election.”

It alleges that “as a result of Fox’s orchestrated defamatory campaign, Dominion’s employees, from its software engineers to its founder and Chief Executive Officer, have been repeatedly harassed. Some have even received death threats. And of course, Dominion’s business has suffered enormous and irreparable economic harm.”

Fox says its coverage of the 2020 election represented “the highest tradition of American journalism.

It pledged to “vigorously defend against this baseless lawsuit in court.”



## **FOX REMAINS KING WITH CONSERVATIVES**

In the wake of 2020 election, pundits and media experts began reporting that large swaths of conservative news audiences were abandoning Fox News in favor of competitor media outlets with unabashedly pro-Trump views, namely, Newsmax and One America News Network. But [a recent Pew Research Center survey](#) reveals that the top-rated cable network retains its dominance as a source of political news among both Republicans and Americans overall.

Nearly half (43 percent) of all U.S. adults surveyed said they got their political news from Fox in the previous week, roughly the same percentage of Americans (39 percent) who said the same in November 2019. This is more than four times the number of viewers who said they get their news from Newsmax (10 percent) and more than six times the number who get their news from OAN (seven percent).

Among Americans who identify as Republican or Republican-leaning, the number who got news from Fox is much higher (62 percent), compared with 21 percent who said they watched Newsmax and the 14 percent who watched OAN.

Despite Newsmax and OAN’s temporary surge in popularity following the 2020 election, the Pew survey found that the audiences for these networks remain similar in size to the number of Americans who read HuffPost (9 percent), The Hill (8 percent) or Sean Hannity’s radio show on (7 percent).

Pew’s survey polled 12,000 adult respondents drawn from its American Trends Panel, a nationally representative list of randomly selected respondents. Surveys were conducted between March 8-14.

# COMMENTARY



**AstraZeneca**

**You gotta be kidding, AstraZeneca.** The British company apparently got the science right, but then royally screwed up the PR.

Seeking to regain much-needed PR momentum following concerns raised in Europe that its COVID-19 vaccine caused blood clots, AstraZeneca issued a press release on March 22 saying its US trial showed its shot “demonstrated a statistically significant vaccine efficacy of 79 percent” at preventing the disease.”

Good news, indeed.

“We are preparing to submit these findings to the US Food and Drug Administration and for the rollout of millions of doses across America should the vaccine be granted US Emergency Use Authorization,” said Mene Pangalos, executive VP, biopharmaceuticals research at AstraZeneca.

Full speed ahead.

Not so fast, responded the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases via a post-midnight March 23 statement expressing concern that “AstraZeneca may have included outdated information from that trial, which may have provided an incomplete view of the efficacy data.”

It urged the company “to review the efficacy data and ensure the most accurate, up-to-date efficacy data be made public as quickly as possible.”

AstraZeneca followed up later on March 23, saying the numbers that it released “were based on a prespecified interim analysis with a data cut-off of February 17.”

The Cambridge-based company promised to “share our primary analysis with the most up-to-date efficacy data” and issue results of the primary analysis within 48 hours.

Anthony Fauci jumped into the fray. He said AstraZeneca has what is likely “a very good vaccine,” but called the press release “an unforced error.”

AstraZeneca deserves all the credit in the world for developing an apparently effective vaccine in record time.

It got the hard part right: science. AstraZeneca dropped the ball on the easy part: public relations.

**Just kidding, defense.** Sidney Powell, who was a member of Donald Trump’s “rigged election” legal team, says “no reasonable person” could possibly believe her claims of a stolen election were based on facts.

What do you think, MAGA Nation?

“Reasonable people understand that the language used in the political arena, like the language used in labor disputes, is often vituperative, abusive and inexact,” she said in a court filing to dismiss the \$1.3B suit against her filed by Dominion Voting Systems.

Her words are not actionable. “As political speech, it lies at the core of First Amendment protection, such speech must be uninhibited, robust and wide-open,” Powell said.

Despite Powell’s claim that her words about the rigged election should not be taken as statements of facts, her website [www.sidneypowell.com](http://www.sidneypowell.com) features a pitch for her Defending the Republic PAC.

“Eighty million people were just disenfranchised by the

*inauguration of a president not elected by lawful votes. The Democrats abandoned their base and the Republicans betrayed theirs.*

*“The American people are starved for truth, restoration of the Rule of Law and even-handed accountability. Americans are fed up with the corruption in government and the elitist political class that views them with condescension and contempt.”*

American people are fed up with being spun by the likes of Powell.

**Here’s the deal: “Sleepy Joe” didn’t doze** during his first presidential press conference, an event much-hyped by the press.

America’s oldest president even made a bit of news when he announced the doubling of the vaccination goal to 200M and threw his hat into the ring for the 2024 presidential race.

President Biden dished a bit of levity to the socially distanced crowd of reporters when asked why he hadn’t set up a re-election campaign, as his predecessor had by this time.

“My predecessor needed to, needed to,” said a laughing Biden. “My predecessor. Oh God, I miss him.”

The president then chided the press for trying to stir things up by focusing on a caged-steel wrestling rematch with Donald Trump.

Savvy politician that he is, Biden put aside the Trump nonsense and returned to his focus on “working to get things done for the people I care most about, which are hardworking, decent American people who are getting—really having it stuck to them.”

“Sleepy Joe” wants to be known as “Steady Joe.”

That is his ticket to triumph in 2024. So far, so good.

**President Biden may not miss Trump**, but my friends at *The Intercept*, the vital online investigative news outlet, do.

In a March 26 fund-raising pitch, *The Intercept* noted that it is not immune to the financial crisis faced by the journalism industry in the post-Trumpian era.

Here is the pithy pitch:

*“Now, after four years of hair-on-fire crisis under Trump, traffic on news websites is declining across the board, and cable news ratings have fallen by as much as one-third.*

*“Nonprofit news organizations like *The Intercept* are facing their own unique challenge, as the same cultural trends driving down ratings are also causing a decline in donations.”*

Though the need for investigative journalism has grown in importance as newsrooms shrink, new donations to *The Intercept* are down 50 percent since Trump left office.

Reporter Glenn Greenwald, documentary filmmaker Laura Poitras and investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill launched *The Intercept* in 2014.

Their goal was to hold the powerful accountable through fearless, adversarial journalism with a focus on surveillance, war, corruption, the environment, technology, criminal justice, and the media.

These should be heady, not tough, times for *The Intercept*.

—Kevin McCauley