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UTAH WANTS PR TO FIGHT OPIOID CRISIS

Utah's Department of Human Services wants to battle its opioid crisis with a PR campaign to raise awareness of the dangers from the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs, according to its RFP.



It envisions a five-year campaign budgeted at \$3.8M but with the potential to hit the \$5M, if additional funding becomes available.

The effort also will promote safe and healthy behaviors associated with

prescription drugs and mobilize community-level efforts to reduce problems creating by drug misuse.

The desired partner will have five years of experience in running statewide communications programs, with outreach to both rural and urban communities.

The campaign is to kick off Aug. 20.

Electronic responses are due May 25 at the Jaggaer (formerly SciQuest) e-procurement site.

Click [here](#) for the RFP.

JOELE FRANK WORKS PENNEY'S CLOSEOUT

Joele Frank is working the bankruptcy filing of J.C. Penney as the 118-year-old retailer blames the COVID-19 pandemic for spurring an accelerated financial restructuring program.

Prior to the pandemic, Penney had made progress on its "plan for renewal" strategy, according to CEO Jill Soltau, but the closing of stores due to the health emergency, "necessitated a more fulsome review to include the elimination of outstanding debt."



The Chapter 11 protection enables Penney to step up its store optimization effort, which includes reducing the "store footprint to better align its business with the current operating environment."

Soltau will close stores in phases during the restructuring,

with the first shutdowns announced in the coming weeks.

Joele Frank Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher has Meaghan Repko, Jed Repko and Dan Moore on the Penney restructuring team.

WEBER SHANDWICK MAKES COVID-19 CUTS

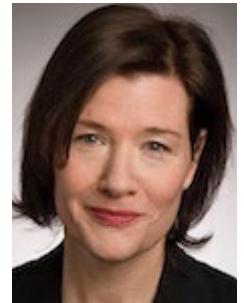
Weber Shandwick has cut and furloughed staff to counter client cutbacks across various sectors, according to an internal memo from CEO Gail Heimann.

Though Weber Shandwick took early action to address the COVID-19 crisis (e.g., cutting executive pay, issuing a hiring freeze and slashing expenses) many companies "are putting plans for new assignments and agency searches on hold," said Heimann

She said of the layoffs: "It is something I hoped I would not have to do; it is a wrenchingly hard decision to make. And I know it is indescribably hard for those to whom we are saying goodbye."

Heimann said her duty, as CEO is to "protect our business—to do everything we can to ensure stability this year and put our firm in a position to thrive and grow in years to come."

Interpublic owns Weber Shandwick. Its Golin, Current Global and DeVries Global PR units also cut staff.



Gail Heimann

RUBENSTEIN READIES FOR NYC'S REOPENING

Rubenstein will help develop messaging for the Coalition for NYC Hospitality & Tourism Recovery, which launched May 13 to promote the Big Apple when it opens for business in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.

NYC & Co., the city's official destination marketing organization, unveiled the Coalition on May 13 to develop PR and marketing communications and public information campaigns to spur a sense of confidence and safety.



The goal is to "revitalize and reaffirm the city's brand positioning around the world following this most challenging time."

Five co-chairs helm the Coalition. They are Lin-Manuel Miranda, actor and creative force behind "Hamilton;" Ellen Futter, American Museum of Natural History president; Thelma Golden, The Studio Museum (Harlem), director/chief curator; Danny Meyer, Union Square Hospitality Group CEO and Peter Ward, New York Hotel & Motel Trades Council, AFL-CIO, president.

NEBRASKA SEEKS CHILDCARE/EARLY ED PR

The Nebraska Department of Education is currently seeking proposals for a statewide communication and public engagement project for its Step Up to Quality program to improve childcare and early childhood education programs.

The effort will refine existing messaging, marketing and advertisements to educate parents about the importance of quality in early childhood care, according to the RFP.

It will seek to recruit licensed child care home providers, child care centers and Head Starts for the Step Up to Quality program.

The budget for the two-year campaign is \$300K. Work begins Sept. 1. There are options to renew for three additional one-year periods.

Interested parties must submit an intent to bid letter by May 22.

Bidder should electronically submit one (1) original of the entire proposal (in PDF format) to nde.stepuptoquality@nebraska.gov.

Proposals will be opened June 1 at: Nebraska Department of Education; Office of Early Childhood; 301 Centennial Mall South, 6th Fl.; Lincoln, NE 68509

Click [here](#) for the RFP.

BOOZ ALLEN'S KOPACK MOVES TO CROSBY

Justyn Kopack, a senior lead technologist at Booz Allen Hamilton consulting firm has moved to Crosby Marketing Communications.



Justyn Kopack

As senior technology project lead, Kopack will guide content, user experience and web development teams to craft digital transformation strategies for federal and corporate clients.

At BAH, Kopack worked on IT modernization contracts for the US Dept. of Health and Human Services. Most recently, she supported systems integration for HealthCare.gov, working

with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Kopak did a ten-year stint as senior editor at The Advisory Board Company, where she managed the Women's Health Policy Report, reprohealthwatch.org.

MORNING CONSULT RAISES \$31M

Morning Consult, data intelligence company, said it raised \$31M in its first round of institutional financing to give the company a valuation of \$306M. James Murdoch's Lupa Systems and Advance Venture Partners were the top investors.

Launched with \$30K in 2014, Morning Consult is on target for \$50M in revenues this year.

The company, which counts more than half of the Fortune 500 as clients, delivers thousands of daily global interviews to provide insight into what people think.

"For decades, legacy market research firms have failed to evolve, creating a critically unmet need for innovation," said Michael Ramlet, co-founder and CEO of Morning Consult.

He said the financing will enable Morning Consult to "more aggressively address that unmet need in the communications, marketing, insights, and strategy functions."

The company's flagship product, Morning Consult Brand Intelligence, features daily tracking of key brand metrics for nearly 4,000 brands in 15 countries.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

MWWPR scoops up **American Dairy Queen Corporation**. MWWPR will manage creative activations and media strategy for all brand initiatives, including but not limited to new menu offerings, limited-time promotions and brand partnerships. ADQ executive vice president of marketing Maria Hokanson cited MWWPR's "passion for the brand and the agency's modern approach to public relations and breakthrough creative ideas" as factors driving its selection. ADQ has more than 4,600 locations in the US. MWWPR also works with such food and beverage industry clients as Red Lobster, Smithfield Foods and Barefoot Wine.



Clarity lands lifestyle learning platform **Tilleo**, which is premiering its online classes in the US. Clarity's New York office will provide media relations for the platform, while its London digital and social media team will work on Tilleo's online marketing. Since it was founded in 2013, the platform has sold over two million courses worldwide. Through July 31, all proceeds from its courses will benefit hunger-relief organization Feeding America.

Marino adds **Sibly**, a text-based mental wellness coaching service, to its client roster. The agency will be tasked with advancing Sibly's work and increasing its market share through a strategic communications and digital campaigns. Sibly partners with organizations to meet the wellness needs of their employees by providing 24/7, on-demand support. Sibly recently pledged three months of free wellness coaching for organizations to help employees cope with the stresses brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

French|West|Vaughan has been selected as agency of record for **Healthy Pet**, which makes small animal bedding and litter products from sustainably sourced, responsibly rescued natural plant fiber. FWV and FWV Fetching—FWV's division dedicated to pet marketing—will manage external communications including media relations, special events, influencer programming, social media and digital marketing throughout 2020 as an extension of the multi-year partnership between the two organizations. FWV will support Healthy Pet's ökocat rebrand and packaging relaunch, as well as its "Carefresh Gives Back" philanthropic efforts.



Jenerate PR has been named agency of record for the **Hawaii Restaurant Association**, which works to unify, represent and support the Hawaii restaurant and food service industry. Jenerate PR will provide strategic communication services to increase awareness of the organization, its resources and initiatives, special events and membership benefits. HRA will also work with Jenerate PR's dedicated social media team to increase reach and engagement across its social channels.

TransMedia Group said it has been retained by **New Journey PAC**, an organization that aims to "make Black Americans Republican again." It also includes MAGA. BLACK, an online destination "for one and all." New Journey was founded by James Golden, who under the name of "Bo Snedley" is senior producer for Rush Limbaugh's talk radio show. New Journey's advisors include former Ohio secretary of state Ken Blackwell and former Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC).

PPP LOANS AND THE SECURE ACT

Small businesses—many PR agencies fall into this category—that have received loans through the Paycheck Protection Program should be aware of certain tax deduction rules. The



Richard Goldstein

IRS released guidance to clarify whether taxpayers receiving the loans may deduct otherwise deductible expenses.

On May 14, the SBA changed course and announced that borrowers, together with their affiliates, who received PPP loans of less than \$2 million have been granted a safe harbor. The safe harbor means that anyone who received a PPP loan “under \$2 million” is automatically deemed to have made a good faith

certification of need, and is safe from having their initial need for the PPP loan second-guessed and challenged on audit.

Businesses can’t deduct the wages or other business expenses they paid for using the loan. The IRS has clarified that no deduction for any expense is allowed for an expense that’s otherwise deductible if both the payment of the expense results in forgiveness of a loan made under the Paycheck Protection Program and the income associated with the forgiveness is excluded from gross income pursuant to the Coronavirus, and Economic Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Top Congressional tax writers disagree with IRS interpretation of expenses related to PPP Loans

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, ranking member Ron Wyden and House Ways and Means Committee Chair Richard Neal expressed disapproval of the recent IRS guidance on deductions for small business that receive PPP loans. The IRS guidance stated that businesses can’t take deduction for expenses, including wages, if the payment of the expenses results in forgiveness of a PPP loan.

The Congressional tax writers sent a letter to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin requesting to reverse the guidance, as it goes against Congressional intent. The letter states, “We believe the position taken in the IRS Notice ignores the over-reaching intent of the PPP, as well as the specific of Congress to allow deductions in the case of PPP loan recipients.”

Employee Retention Credit

The Employee Retention Credit is a refundable credit against employment taxes equal to 50 percent of the qualified wages an eligible employer pays to employees after March 12, 2020, and before January 1, 2021.

An employer may not receive the Employee Retention Credit if it receives a PPP loan that’s authorized under the CARES Act. An eligible employer that receives a PPP loan, regardless of the date of the loan, cannot claim the credit.

However, employers that applied for a PPP loan, received payment and repaid the loan by May 14, 2020, will be treated as though the employer had not received a covered loan under the PPP for purposes of the Employee Retention Credit.

Is an employer eligible to receive an Employee Retention Credit after the PPP loan is forgiven?

No. An employer that receives a PPP loan may not receive an Employee Retention Credit regardless of whether and when the loan is forgiven.

Issues pertaining to the Secure Act and your retirement

The Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement Act of 2019, better known as the “Secure Act,”

contains some significant provisions aimed at increasing access to tax-advantaged accounts and preventing older Americans from outliving their assets.

The following are key provisions of the Secure Act:

It increases the cap under which they can automatically enroll workers in “safe harbor” retirement plans, from 10 percent of wages to 15 percent of wages.

Many part-time workers will be eligible to participate in an employer retirement plan.

The Act pushes back the age at which retirement plan participants need to take required minimum distributions from 70.5 to 72 for those who are not 70.5 by the end of 2019 and lets traditional IRA owners make contributions indefinitely.

The Act mandates that most non-spouses inheriting IRAs take the distribution that end up emptying the account in 10 years. The Act allows 401(k) plans to offer annuities.

Other changes in the Act include the elimination of “stretch IRAs,” which allowed non-spouses inheriting retirement accounts to stretch out disbursements over their lifetimes. The new rules require a full payout from the inherited IRA within 10 years of the death of the original account holder.

Richard Goldstein is a partner at Buchbinder Tunick & Company LLP, New York, Certified Public Accountants.

MILLIONAIRES SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES

Patriotic Millionaires, a nonprofit comprised of high-net-worth Americans that advocates for higher tax rates for corporations and the wealthy, has hired Washington, D.C.-based government affairs and business development consulting firm Sixkiller Consulting to ensure that future Federal relief efforts for the COVID-19 crisis remain focused on working people and the small businesses that employ them.

Founded in 2010, Patriotic Millionaires describes itself as “proud traitors to their class.” The group, whose members include entrepreneurs, Wall Street investors, industrialists and wealthy heirs, is dedicated to using its collective wealth to close the opportunity gap by promoting public policies that increase the minimum wage, raise taxes on corporations and the rich and ensure that the nation’s economy meets the needs of working people.

The group has now turned its attention to The Small Business Administration’s Paycheck Protection Program, the \$350 billion federal relief initiative that was intended to help small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has hired Sixkiller to help with “legislative efforts in support of an economic relief plan that prioritizes the needs of working people during the COVID-19 crisis,” according to lobbying registration documents filed in May.

In January, Patriotic Millionaires lobbied Washington to support H.R. 582, or the “Raise the Wage Act,” which would provide increases in the Federal minimum wage for employees over a seven-year period, including tipped employees and new hires who are younger than 20 years old.

Leading the Patriotic Millionaires account is Sixkiller managing partner Mariah Sixkiller, who’s former national security advisor to House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD). She’s joined by Madison Strader, who was previously a legislative assistant to Congressman Adam Smith (D-WA).



QATAR TAPS PROOF STRATEGIES

Qatar has enlisted Proof Strategies to assist its DC embassy with public communications in the US.

The \$30K per-month pact went into effect May 1 and runs through the rest of the year.



Luci Manning

Proof is to “embed” one or more staffers at the Embassy for at least one day a week, once COVID-19 workplace restrictions are lifted.

Luci Manning, director of media relations, and/or Chris Burrig, director of digital strategy, are to provide training to Embassy officials.

The Proof team, which includes US/general manager Mimi Carter and senior account director Henry Vies, will

monitor relevant coverage and develop or update the Embassy’s media materials, tools and procedures.

Hamad Al-Muftah, deputy chief of mission, and Asma Al-Amri, who oversees embassy media & operations, serve as the main points of contact for Proof staffers.

Since 2017, Qatar has been under a political and economic blockade erected by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Egypt for its alleged support of terrorism and cozy ties with Iran.

CAYMAN TURTLE CENTER SEEKS PR FIRM

The Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Center has released an RFP for a “Telling Our Story” marketing communications campaign.

The Center is the largest land-based tourist attraction in the Cayman Islands, drawing more than 200K visitors per year largely from cruise ships.

The desired partner will have story-telling expertise and be savvy in developing marketing proposals for digital and social media campaigns. It also will manage and maintain the Center’s brand persona, look and consistency, according to the RFP.

Electronic proposals are due May 29 at <https://cayman.bonfirehub.com/opportunities>.

Click [here](#) for the RFP.

PR PRO HOPSON BACK TO POLITICAL ARENA

Andy Hopson has signed on as director of communications for Republican Gavin Rollins, who is running to succeed the retiring Congressman Ted Yoho in Florida.



Andy Hopson

Most recently serving as PR director for Livestream Prom, a platform to enable high school students to hold senior proms during the COVID-19 crisis, Hopson was VP at Ogilvy, president of EvansGroup PR, president of Publicis Dialog, president/CEO of northeast region for Burson-Marsteller, managing director/Chicago for Ruder Finn and president of Noble.

The Rollins post marks a return to the political scene for Hopson, who began his career as a DC press secretary for conservative Republican Dan Marriott, who represented the Salt Lake City area.

TRUST IN MEDIA’S COVID-19 REPORTING IS UP

News coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to dominate the media cycle, but Americans’ opinions regarding the media’s handling of the outbreak have generally turned more favorable, according to analysis recently released by the Pew Research Center.

Pew’s study found that the number of Americans who currently believe the media exaggerates the risks associated with the outbreak now stands at 48 percent, a decline of 14 percent from Pew’s previous findings in March (62 percent).

Americans’ perceptions regarding whether the media have conveyed the coronavirus’ risks truthfully remain divided, however, and typically that division lies along partisan lines.

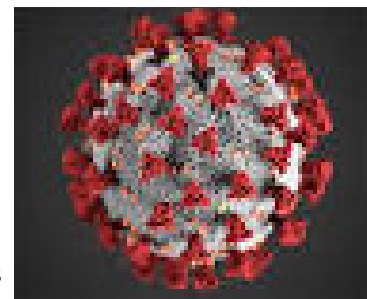
While only 30 percent of respondents identifying as Democrat or Democrat-leaning currently believe the media has exaggerated the risks of the outbreak (compared to 49 percent in March), the dial hasn’t moved nearly as much for Republicans, 68 percent of whom still believe the media exaggerates the risks of COVID-19 (a drop of only eight percent from the 76 percent of Republican respondents who said this in March).

Overall, Pew’s analysis discovered that Americans approve of the media’s coverage of the pandemic, with more than two-thirds (69 percent) of respondents saying they believe the media have covered the outbreak very well—or at least somewhat well—a number that’s virtually unchanged from previous Pew findings in March (70 percent).

More than half (59 percent) additionally said they think the media are providing them with important COVID-19-related information, compared to about a quarter of Americans (24 percent) who disagree. About half of respondents (49 percent) also believe the media’s coverage of COVID-19 has been largely accurate, compared with 24 percent who think it’s been mostly inaccurate.

Once again, however, respondents’ political leanings appear as a clear indicator in influencing their perceptions regarding the media’s accuracy and overall performance in covering the COVID-19 pandemic. While about eight-in-ten Democrat and Democrat-leaning voters think media have covered COVID-19 somewhat or very well, only slightly more than half of Republican and Republican-leaning voters (54 percent) believe this. And while two-thirds of Democrats (66 percent) think the media’s COVID-19 coverage has been largely accurate, less than half that number of Republicans (31 percent) agree.

Pew’s analysis was based on a survey of more than 10,100 U.S. adults drawn from the nonpartisan think tank’s American Trends Panel, a nationally representative list of randomly selected U.S. adults. Data for the report was compiled as part of the nonpartisan think tank’s Election News Pathways project, an ongoing initiative that seeks to understand how Americans are getting their news in the months leading up to the 2020 election. Surveys were conducted online between April 20-26.



FCC CHIEF PAI SHUFFLES PR TEAM

Federal Communications Commission chief Ajit Pai has recast his media team with the departure of press secretary Tina Pelkey after a nearly three-year run. She is joining Blue Origin, the aerospace enterprise owned by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, as senior manager, government affairs communication.



Tina Pelkey

She joined the FCC after more than four years as as senior VP at Black Rock Group, and jobs at Weber Shandwick in Brussels and DCI Group in Alexandria, VA.

Pai praised Pelkey for being “incredibly responsive both internally and externally.”

He has recruited Anne Veigle as deputy director of communications. She was PA director at the Commerce Department’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Earlier, Veigle was senior VP at USTelecom, senior editor at *Communications Daily*, chief editor at the Office of the United States Trade Representative and reporter at the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* and *Washington Times*.

Pai has promoted Will Wiquist, who was deputy press secretary, to associate director of communications, and Katie Gorscak, communications director at the FCC’s Connect2Health task force, to senior communications advisor.

KEKST CNC HANDLES INTEL SAT BANKRUPTCY

Kekst CNC is guiding the bankruptcy of Intelsat, the debt-burdened operator of the world’s biggest commercial satellite fleet, as it positions for the federal government’s auction of the airwaves for use in 5G networks.

Stephen Spengler, CEO, said Intelsat is respected for its quality, innovation and premium services but success came despite being burdened by substantial legacy debt.

The financial restructuring will enable it “to invest and pursue our strategic growth objectives, build on our strengths, and serve the mission-critical needs of our customers with additional resources and wind in our sails,” he said.

Private equity firms BC Partners and Silver Lake own big chunks of Intelsat. Kekst CNC’s Sherri Toub, Ruth Pachman and Ross Lovern are working the Intelsat filing.

CENTOGENE NABS BAXEVANIS FOR PR POST

Centogene, a genetic biotech focused on rare diseases, has named Angelos Baxevanis senior vice president communication and marketing.



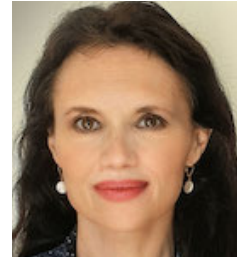
Angelos Baxevanis

Baxevanis joins Centogene from AAB Consulting Inc. where he worked with Sobi Pharmaceuticals on projects to enhance commercial capabilities in the rare disease area. He previously led the marketing communication and marketing excellence department at Smith & Nephew and was commercial lead at Astra Zeneca.

At Centogene, Baxevanis will be responsible for further developing the company’s marketing and communication strategies, establishing internal marketing workflows, and further positioning it as a leading provider of medical solutions for rare disease patients.

ON THE MOVE

Finn Partners has hired **Véronique Simon-Cluzel** as VP, health, a newly created position. Simon-Cluzel most recently headed up communications for the national autism strategy of the French Secretary of State for People with Disabilities. Before that, she was in charge of public relations at the ARC Foundation for Cancer Research. She has also overseen communications campaigns for such clients as the French Association for Diabetes, Merck Serono, AstraZeneca and Boston Scientific, as well as working on initiatives in a range of medical specialties including cancer, gastrointestinal and neurologic ailments and women’s health priorities.



Véronique Simon-Cluzel

Approach Marketing is adding five senior leaders to its executive team.

Sarah Ann Harris, previously head of accounts, has been promoted to managing director. **Meggan Needham**, who joined the agency last year, has been promoted to head of accounts. **Faith Borland** has been promoted to head of digital, **Alyssa DeRose** has been named head of growth, and **Liz Woerth** will now be head of talent.

Aileron Communications has promoted **Peter Gray** to vice president, client services and **Sandra Bartishell** to vice president of operations. Gray, who been with Aileron since 2014, was previously director of client services. Bartishell most recently served as Aileron’s director of operations. She oversees all aspects of the agency’s business functions.

MEDIA MANEUVERS

A bill introduced in the US Senate by **Maria Cantwell** (D-WA) would allow individual television stations that are affiliated with a larger network to qualify for assistance under the Paycheck Protection Program. The Local News and Emergency Act of 2020 would allow such stations to receive funds as long as “the proceeds of the loan are used to support expenses associated with the continued provision of local news, information, content, or emergency information.” The size of the individual station would simply need to meet the conditions that apply to other small businesses under the Industry Classification Code.

Condé Nast is axing approximately 100 US-based employees and is placing about 100 more on furlough for several months. A company spokesman told the *Wall Street Journal* that the layoffs affect employees in the advertising, editorial and corporate divisions. No magazine closures are expected, and no titles are moving to a digital-only format. Last month, the company announced a round of cutbacks that included pay cuts of between 10 and 20 percent for employees, making \$100K a year or more, with Lynch and the external members of the company’s board saw their salaries drop by 50 percent.

A new round of furloughs is hitting **Tribune Publishing**, which operates newspapers including the *Chicago Tribune* and *Baltimore Sun*. The *New York Post* reports that the company has reached a tentative agreement with the Chicago Tribune Guild to furlough 160 editorial staffers for one week per month in May, June and July. A tweet from the Guild said that the deal “fends off permanent pay reductions and assures us that the company will not try further cuts until at least the end of July.”

COMMENTARY

“There would be four million testing kits available with a week,” said Donald Trump during his March 6 photo-op at Centers for Disease Control & Prevention headquarters in Atlanta. “Anybody that needs a test gets a test.”

Not even close. Trump’s statement was false then, as it is now. And worse for our unmasked cheerleader-in-chief, the Food and Drug Administration determined on May 14 that the Abbott Labs’ COVID-19 test kits used by Trump deliver too many false negatives.

The testing kit fiasco is just another sign of the White House’s failed leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In true Trumping fashion, the president is now playing the denial card. During his visit to an Allentown medical supply company, Trump said: “Could be that testing is, frankly overrated. Maybe it is overrated.”

He then delivered this doozy: “When you test, you find something is wrong with people. If we didn’t do any testing, we would have very few cases.” It’s better to keep one’s head in the sand.

When he flops, Trump changes the story to divert attention from his ineptitude. His month ago promise of “beautiful” tests for everyone has been transformed into: “What’s so hot about testing?”

As America approaches the 90,000-death toll from COVID-19 mark, the president has begun the process of attacking the body count as “fake news” cooked up by the Deep State and his political opponents to deny his re-election.

Health officials say the death toll is far greater than the reported numbers, as many of those who died during the initial and chaotic COVID-19 surges were not included in the tally.

The nation holds a debt of gratitude to California Senator Kamala Harris, who took a pre-emptive strike against Trump downplaying COVID-19 death toll.

She wrote a letter on May 15 to federal health officials warning of a misinformation campaign launched by Trump to deflate the numbers of deaths attributed to COVID-19 to inflate his re-election prospects.

Harris noted that Trump used this tactic before in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, where an extreme undercount of the dead was used to cover up the failed disaster relief effort.

The Senator said it’s incumbent on Health & Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and FEMA administrator Peter Gaynor “to ensure an accurate and transparent death toll and consistent COVID-19 statistics.”

Keeping the COVID-19 death toll legit is the honorable way to remember those lost to the pandemic.

Trump, who shamefully compares his presidency to that of Abraham Lincoln, should take the words of the Great Emancipator to heart. At Gettysburg, Lincoln said: “That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.”

Lincoln acknowledged the heavy toll of the Battle of Gettysburg, despite the fact that the massive loss of lives did not bode well for his re-election in the Civil War-weary North.

Trump will diminish the death toll from the virus to further his own political career. His “America First” slogan has always been “Trump First.”

Will Facebook become a “hotbed of disinformation” during the November federal, state and local elections?

That’s the fear of Democratic Senators Robert Menendez, Kamala Harris and Richard Blumenthal.

The trio sent a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on May 12 with questions about its disinformation policy, specifically pertaining to hate speech, discriminatory targeting and the threats such disinformation poses to civil rights and voting rights in advance of the 2020 election.

The Senators said the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already dire problem of online misinformation, especially at Facebook.

“Despite highly publicized efforts to police its platform, millions of Facebook users have received posts regarding bogus COVID-19 cures and conspiracy theories,” wrote the Senators.

Zuckerberg’s platform also is at odds with other sites due to its “unprecedented and controversial policy of not fact-checking political candidates’ statements or ads and allowing them to run false and misleading advertisements.”

The Senators asked Zuckerberg if his company is going to change its policy of not fact-checking statements/ads of politicians and their statements about COVID-19.



Mark Zuckerberg

They want to know how Facebook will deal with content tied to voter suppression ahead of the election, hate speech including misinformation and attacks on Asians and Asian-Americans and whether there’s support for the addition of a “person with a high-level of civil and human rights expertise to the board of directors.”

The son-in-law-in-chief can’t guarantee the presidential election will take place on Nov. 3.

Though Donald Trump is hell-bent on re-opening the country, Jared Kushner apparently believes it may be risky for people to go to the polls. While it’s okay for Americans to visit bowling alleys and tattoo parlors, it’s not okay to go outside to cast a vote.

Kushner told *Time* on May 12 that he couldn’t “commit one way or the other” on whether the vote would take place on Election Day. He added that’s the plan for now. Thanks, Jared.

Kushner, who is the president’s top advisor on building walls on the southern border, arranging peace in the Middle East and managing supply chains during the COVID-19 pandemic, assumes he has power to overturn the federal law that mandates Election Day on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November. He’s power-mad.

After a storm of criticism on social media, Kushner clarified his statement, telling NBC News: “I have not been involved in, nor am I aware of, any discussions about trying to change the date of the presidential election.”

The boy wonder of the White House needs to grow up. He’s not King Jared.

—Kevin McCauley