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NYSERDA LOOKS FOR PR PARTNERS

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority has put out a call for firms to support its communications efforts for a range of programs and initiatives.



They may submit proposals for each or all of the following categories: market development, policy, offshore wind and large-scale renewables, and distributed energy resources.

NYSERDA is looking for firms able “to develop compelling and effective messaging that conveys the benefits of energy efficiency and clean energy technology to all audiences,” according to the RFP.

It plans to issue five-year contracts with the possibility of two one-year renewal periods.

December is earliest start date for any potential work.

Proposals are due Oct. 5. They go to: NYSERDA; Contract Management; Jillian Baxter; 17 Columbia Circle; Albany, NY 12203-6399

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

NYSERDA will post any changes in the RFP at <http://www.nyserdera.ny.gov/funding-opportunities>.

GE VET BEHRENS JOINS KRAFT HEINZ

Bill Behrens, who did an 11-year stint at General Electric, has joined Kraft Heinz as VP and global head of government affairs. He takes over for Abby Blunt, who is transitioning to a part-time strategic advisor slot on Oct. 4.

In her new position, Blunt will focus on environmental, social and governance issues. Most recently, she served as a key member of the food company’s global COVID-19 task force.



Bill Behrens

At GE, Behrens exited as head of federal government affairs & policy/government affairs strategy & execution. He launched the “GE Voices” grassroots initiative to expand its lobbying reach to employees, retirees, suppliers and shareholders and advocated on behalf of the company’s positions on taxes and export credits.

Before GE, Behrens served in the White House as special assistant to the president for intergovernmental affairs and was a senior advisor at the State Dept.

He will be based in DC.

Kraft Heinz posted a 1.6 percent rise in first-half revenues to \$13B. It earned \$543M compared to a \$1.3B year-ago loss.

FINSBURY MAKES MOVE ON SARD VERBINNEN

Finsbury Glover Hering is discussing a takeover of [Sard Verbinnen & Co](#), a deal that would create a firm with more than 1,000 staffers and \$350M in annual revenues.

Golden Gate Capital, which owns a 40 percent stake in Sard, would retain a five percent stake in the new company. WPP, FGH’s parent, would own a little more than 50 percent of the company.



George Sard and Paul Verbinnen launched their financial/strategic communications shop in 1992. It has more than 200 staffers.



Sard will become a co-chair of FGH/SVC, joining Roland Rudd, founder of Finsbury; and Carter Eskew, co-founder of Glover Park Group. Verbinnen is expected to take on the co-CEO of North America post.

SHELL OIL’S BURNETT SHIFTS TO BRUNSWICK

Shell Oil veteran Alex Burnett has joined Brunswick Group’s business & society practice to focus on climate change.

Over 13 years at the oil giant, Burnett designed and launched its “powering progress” campaign to promote its effort to transition to net-zero emissions. As group corporate & reputation manager, he led a unit handling communications policies dealing with environmental, social and governance issues.



Alex Burnett

Prior to Shell, Burnett was senior advisor for communications & PA at Toyota Europe, consultant at Luther Pendragon shop and researcher for former UK prime minister David Cameron.

LAMBERT & CO. ACQUIRES VANDIVER GROUP

[Lambert & Co.](#) has acquired The Vandiver Group, a St. Louis-based strategic communications and market research firm. Vandiver Group founder Donna Vandiver joins Lambert & Co. as managing director and will continue to lead the St. Louis office.

The acquisition, which was facilitated by The Stevens Group, marks Lambert’s fourth transaction in the last two years, fueling its integrated service offerings and expanding its talent bench. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

“This acquisition is a culmination of a relationship driven by values alignment and strategic fit,” said Lambert & Co. CEO Jeff Lambert.

DELTA DOOMS TRAVEL RECOVERY HOPES

COVID-19 remains a major hurdle for the travel industry, according to a new study from The Brandon Agency and TravelBoom Marketing.

While the agencies' COVID-19 Travel Consumer Sentiment Study found that almost eight of out 10 potential travelers surveyed (79 percent) had been fully vaccinated, nearly half said they were either hesitant to book a vacation—or won't be booking one—due to the emergence of the Delta variant.

More than a quarter (27 percent) of respondents said that they won't even start to plan a trip until 2022 or later. Even those who were currently thinking about taking a trip voiced hesitation, with 39 percent indicating that they would not actually travel until sometime next year, and 33 percent saying they would not book their trip until 2022.

One thing that could sway more travelers toward hitting the road again is flexibility on the part of travel providers. Eight out of ten respondents indicated that they could be persuaded to book a vacation during the pandemic if they were allowed to change their travel dates without penalty.

SONORAN SPEAKS FOR AFGHAN RESISTANCE

Sonoran Policy Group has signed a six-month contract to provide strategic advisory services to Ahmad Massoud, a leader of the resistance to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Massoud is the 32-year-old son of "The Lion of Panjshir," who kicked the Soviets and then the Taliban out of the Panjshir region.



Ahmad Massoud

Al-Qaeda assassinated the legendary guerilla leader Ahmad Shah Massoud on Sept. 9, 2011, two days prior to the attack on the World Trade Center.

Sonoran's representation of Massoud is via its Stryk Global Diplomacy unit. It is working on a pro bono basis.

The Taliban has launched an offensive against Massoud's forces in the Panjshir Valley.

The Massoud Foundation says it is "monitoring the Pakistani-supported Taliban invasion of the Panjshir Valley with alarm and resolve."

It is organizing humanitarian aid packages, assisting refugees and calling for international support.

BLUESHIRT GROUP FORGES \$2B SPAC DEAL

The Blueshirt Group is handling Forge Global, the online securities trading platform, as it merges with Motive Capital in a SPAC deal valued at \$2B.

The *Wall Street Journal* notes that if the deal is completed, Forge would be the first dedicated trading services for private firms to become a public company.

The Forge marketplace has nearly 400 registered users. They have traded shares in more than 400 companies, generating volume in excess of \$10B.

CEO Kelly Rodrigues said Forge believes "everyone should be able to trade in the private markets," and his firm has developed the technology to operate an efficient and liquid market that connects a large number of private companies, shareholders and investors.

Blueshirt has Chris Hollenbeck representing Forge.

London's Next Fifteen Communications Group 15 owns Blueshirt, which is based in San Francisco.

ON THE MOVE

FINN Partners names **Tom Jones** to lead its New York health group and pharma sector teams. He succeeds Kristie Kuhl, who was appointed FINN global health practice lead in July. Jones joined Finn in 2019 as senior partner, health and wellness. Before coming to the agency, he led the North American Health Practice at Ketchum, and has served as a senior vice president at Makovsky and executive director, communications at Novartis. "Since Tom joined FINN, the New York health group has been growing at an impressive pace," said Kristie Kuhl, managing partner, FINN Global Health Practice Lead.



Tom Jones

Huge names **Toni Howard Lowe** group vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion, and **Lisa De Bonis** global chief experience officer. Lowe comes to Huge from Ernst & Young, where she was diversity & inclusiveness leader for its national tax & people advisory practices. In her new post, she will lead the design of a holistic DE&I strategy at Huge, ensuring that the agency's commitment to DE&I is reflected across the organization. De Bonis was previously managing director at Accenture Interactive.

Wagstaff Media + Marketing appoints **Tara Schroetter** as managing director, digital & social media. Schroetter was previously vice president, strategy and head of digital and social at Rogers & Cowan PMK, leading a variety of celebrity and entertainment industry clientele. She was also responsible for all aspects of digital, paid media and social media marketing. "Tara is a natural leader and brings a wealth of digital marketing experience to our agency and clients," said agency president Mary Wagstaff.

Imre names **Bria Rooney** VP of public relations. Rooney joins imre from GCI Health. She has also been a senior manager at Weber Shandwick and an account exec at Marina Maher Communications. In her new post, Rooney will be responsible for new campaign strategy leadership as well as team development and business growth.



Bria Rooney

Mark Allen & Co. brings on **Jason Fink** as account director. Fink comes to the agency from Butler Associates, where he was a VP. He was previously deputy press secretary for the New York City Department of Education and communications coordinator for the New York State Assembly. At Mark Allen, Fink will lead the firm's efforts to provide strategic counsel for its growing roster of clients. "His client-centric mindset and track record of helping companies and organizations navigate through a fast-changing media and communications landscape will bring great value to our clients," said Mark Allen CEO and founder Mark Pasetky.

CAMP, The Family Experience Company, hires **Chris Spadaccini** as chief marketing officer. Most recently, Spadaccini was CMO at WarnerMedia Entertainment, where he led marketing for brands including HBO, TBS, TNT, truTV, and HBO Max. Before that, he was head of marketing at HBO. In his new position, he will lead CAMP's brand, advertising, creative, media, and growth marketing strategies.

AMUSING OURSELVES TO DEATH ON 9/11

On Saturday evening, 9/11, Fox Sports broadcast a baseball game between the New York Yankees and the New York Mets in a “subway series,” a trope recalling the days when New York players like Ruth and Gehrig actually rode the subway to the ballpark.



Bill Huey

The event began at 7 p.m. EDT, with a too-long, World Series sort of pageant that included present and has-been politicians, Port Authority and New York City cops, firemen, sanitation workers and even the Department of Corrections staff. There were plenty of American flags on display (badly), as well as bastard hybrids like the “Thin Blue” flag.

This was followed by a game in which Fox used every opportunity to promote itself and its role in the game. The game itself seemed secondary, a kind of play going on in the background of commentary and interviews with Joe Torre, Mike Piazza, and other baseball luminaries.

The class of the evening was a performance by Anaïs Reno, a 17-year-old New York Jazz recording artist, who sang “America the Beautiful” in the most straightforward, lovely way imaginable, without musical accompaniment.

But the lingering question persists: Can America ever wean itself off hype and stop “amusing ourselves to death,” as Neil Postman prophetically wrote in 1985? Does everything have to be pumped up until it’s over the top, or else a nausea-inducing combination of solemnity and mawkish sentimentality, phony patriotism, and sententious speechifying?

BTW, speaking of empty hype, I didn’t see Rudy Giuliani the entire day, although he hosted his annual 9/11 dinner at one of the Cipriani restaurants, according to Maggie Haberman of the *New York Times*. At the dinner, the former America’s Mayor reportedly gave a rambling speech in which he impersonated Queen Elizabeth and berated General Mark Milley, among other things.

Rudy continues to edge toward the pit, but the Yankees snapped a seven-game losing streak, with two homers by Aaron Judge.

Bill Huey is president of Strategic Communications and the author of Carbon Man (Kindle, 2010).

LARRY KING’S PUBLICIST LANDS AT CLARITY

Dana Steiner, who was Larry King’s publicist, is joining Clarity as VP, media and entertainment, working out of the agency’s Los Angeles office.



Dana Steiner

Steiner also handled the launch of Ora TV, the digital entertainment network and production company that was started up by King and Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim.

She previously held positions at PM-K*BNC, Rogers & Cowan and Metro Public Relations, working with such clients as YouTube, NBCU/Comcast and FOX.

At Clarity, Steiner will oversee the agency’s media and entertainment practice, focusing on leading and expanding its work with digital media, entertainment, streaming content, production and tech clients.

CINCINNATI SCHOOL DISTRICT NEEDS PR

Cincinnati City School District is looking for a marketing communications firm to promote its image and drive initiatives. The CCSD serves more than 36K students enrolled in 60-plus schools.

It ranks as the third-largest school system in the Buckeye State.

CCSD has launched “A Road-map to Destination Cincinnati Schools” strategic plan that outlines its goals and measures for equity, engagement and excellence.

CCSD’s marketing partner will design marketing & communications materials, support events, pitch media, manage social media and handle any potential crisis.

CCSD plans to enroll a firm for work beginning Nov. 1 and running through June 2024. There will be two additional one-year option years.

Proposals are due Sept. 24 at procurement@cpsboe.k12.us. [Read the RFP.](#)



CURRAN TRADES UNC FOR NOTRE DAME

Joel Curran, who is vice chancellor for communications at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, is shifting to Notre Dame for the VP-PA & communications spot effective Nov. 1.

Prior to joining his alma mater in 2013, Curran did a five-year stint at MSL Group as managing director for its midwest region and then New York.

Earlier, Curran had a nine-year run at Cramer-Krasselt, where he co-founded its CKPR unit.

At UNC, Curran oversaw 50 staffers dealing with media relations, executive communications, internal PR, web publishing and social media.

He handled fallout from the UNC’s connection to the Confederacy, drove publicity surrounding its \$4.3B capital campaign and managed communications around the COVID-19 pandemic.

Notre Dame president Father John Jenkins called Curran a talented, highly accomplished leader in the higher education space who has a passion for the work of PR.



Joel Curran

ICR HOPS ON GOGORO’S SPAC MERGER

[ICR Inc.](#) is handling media and investor relations for Gogoro, Taiwan’s No. 1 electric scooter company, as it merges with Poema Global Holdings Corp. via a SPAC transaction valued at \$2.4B.

Gogoro’s “smartscooters” are supported by subscription-based battery swapping stations to enable easy refueling. There are more than 400K Gogoro battery subscribers.

The company plans to use proceeds of the SPAC for expansion in China, India and Southeast Asia. The national development funds of Taiwan and Singapore, as well as Apple supplier Foxconn, have invested in the deal.

Gogoro will trade on the NASDAQ when the transaction closes during the first quarter of 2022.

ICR’s Robin Yang and Michael Bowen are global investor contacts for Gogoro and Poema, while Brad Burgess and Edmond Lococo focus on the Asia-Pacific media.

[Weber Shandwick’s](#) Tony Ho Loke is also providing media support for Gogoro.

MADISON, WI'S AIRPORT FLIES MARKETING RFP

The Dane County Regional Airport, the airport serving Wisconsin's capital of Madison, is seeking proposals from agencies that can provide marketing and advertising services.

Also known as Truax Field, the Dane County Regional Airport is the second-busiest commercial airports in the Badger State.

Dane County Regional Airport seeks to award a five-year contract to agencies that can provide on-call services covering advertising, marketing, social media, website design/re-design/development/enrichment, brand development, creative development, media buying and market research, media relations and crisis communication support.

Proposals are due by 2:00 p.m. (CST) on Tuesday, September 28, and should be submitted via the Purchasing Bid Dropbox located on the www.danepurchasing.com site (click on Purchasing – Bid Dropbox or click on the Open RFP's and Bids page link in the upper-right corner).

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

KUHNS SCORES PR GOAL WITH USL

The United Soccer League has named Will Kuhns senior VP of communications and PR.

He will devise a communications strategy for the Tampa-based USL and leverage national, regional and local storylines within the sports, business and community media.

Kuhns did a nearly 15-year run at Major League Soccer, where he exited as supervising producer for its media arm, managing partnerships with ESPN, Univision and PlutoTV. He joins USL from Austin FC, the newest MLS club.

USL has 33 teams in its championship league. In 2022, the Queensboro FC expansion team will begin play at a new 7,500-seat stadium at York



Will Kuhns

College, Jamaica.

It will be the first-ever professional soccer team to be based in NYC's borough of Queens.

C STREET CORPORATE ADVISORY LAUNCHES

Jon Henes has launched C Street Advisory Group to help potential clients navigate what the nearly 20-year Kirkland & Ellis partner calls the "era of reputation."

Henes was national finance chair for Kamala Harris for the People and co-finance chair for Ray McGuire's bid for NYC mayor.

Antara Capital is helping to bankroll C Street, which will focus on business transactions; diversity, equity & inclusion; talent recruitment/retention; and communications and crisis services.

The communications group includes crisis chief Melissa Prober, ex-associate counsel at the New York Genome Center

and Clinton Global Initiative; external affairs head Lisa Hernandez Gioia, a CGI, Hillary for America and Related Companies' Hudson Yards development veteran; and communications director Maddie Sewani, a five-year Kekst CNC alum.



Jon Henes

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

[Peppercomm](#) is named PR agency of record for the **Dole Sunshine Company**, formalizing a partnership that has been more than a year in the making. The agency will support Dole across its portfolio, shifting from a sprint-based campaign model to a strategic corporate and brand communications model that supports the brand globally. The account is being led out of Peppercomm's New York office by chief client officer and senior partner Maggie O'Neill and partner and senior vice president Melissa Vigue with teams in San Francisco, London and Singapore. Asia is supported via a strategic partnership with Singapore-based Progressive Communications.



Foodmix Marketing Communications has been enlisted by **Gills Onions** to help the company expand its reach and distribution within the foodservice and fresh produce industry. Foodmix will focus on creating Gills' new brand positioning and brand refresh in addition to creating chef sessions to generate content development. Efforts will span across social, digital and sales collateral. Foodmix will also work with Gills Onions to create tools to educate foodservice operators about the variety of onions that exist, what they are best used for and how they are grown and processed to extend shelf life.

Workhouse picks up **The Anthony Quinn Estate**.

The agency will direct a program of international branded visibility for the estate, including partnerships, promotions, sales and exhibitions. Housed within the estate is a collection consisting of thousands of Quinn's sketches, paintings, sculptures, artifacts, including his workbenches and tools, manuscripts, diaries, personal correspondence, films, rare photos, recorded interviews, and his book collection of more than 9,000 volumes.

[Zapwater Communications](#) has been named agency of record for **The Hotel of South Beach**, an art deco Miami Beach property run by Goldman Properties. Zapwater will handle the hotel's reopening and launch it as a new hotel brand with a strategic communications campaign that includes media relations, brand partnerships and influencer marketing.

Ketchum is appointed agency of record for global health-care management platform **UpHealth** as the company prepares for broader global adoption of its system. The UpHealth platform creates digitally-enabled "care communities" that aim to improve access and achieve better patient outcomes at lower cost. Its clients include governments, health plans, healthcare providers and community-based organizations. "The Ketchum team shares our energy and passion for how innovation can transform healthcare globally," said UpHealth CEO Dr. Ramesh Balakrishnan.



M2M PR and Partnerships, signs on as agency of record for Los Angeles-based visual technology company **4D Fun, Inc.** M2M will work to broaden awareness of 4D Fun's proprietary technology and services, as well as educating the musical artist community on the company's unique value proposition for monetizing artists' creative product. The agency will also pursue select strategic partnerships. Eileen Mercolino, M2M vice president of marketing for its west coast office, will lead the initiative for the agency.

ALABAMA TO HIRE FIRM FOR JOB TRAINING PR

Alabama Industrial Development Training is looking for a firm to develop a PR and media engagement program to build support for its Workforce Council.

The Council's goal is to facilitate cooperation between government and industry "to help Alabama develop a sustainable, top-notch workforce," according to its RFP.



The Council wants to add 500K credentialed Alabamians to the workforce by 2025.

AIDT's PR partner must have at least three years of experience working with media in the state. The selected agency will

develop messaging around the Council's messaging, draft press releases and produce promotional materials.

Proposals are due Sept. 30. They go to: AIDT: Request for Proposal Responses 2021-3 Communications and Administrative Support; Attn: Gilmer Turner; One Technology Court; Montgomery, AL 36116

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

CONSUMERS PREFER QUALITY OVER PURPOSE

Marketers have been inculcated to the idea that brands build value through purpose-driven stories that reflect their commitment to social causes. But according to a study by Boston-based healthcare and B2B tech agency [PAN Communications](#), consumers' buying decisions are still mostly influenced by the product or service a company provides.

In PAN's annual study, nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of consumers polled said that, when making a buying decision, they prefer a company with a great product/service over a company that stands for something.

The PAN study also finds that marketers produce a lot of branded content: 38 percent said they produce between six and 10 pieces of content per month, and 29 percent said they produce between 16 and 20 pieces of content per month. However, consumers ingest far less than what marketers create, only between one and five pieces of brand content per month.

PAN's eighth annual "[Content Fitness Report](#)" was based on responses from more than 130 U.S. marketing professionals as well as 1,000 consumers.

INTERMARKET CO-FOUNDER ZACHOWSKI DIES

Matt Zachowski, who co-founded Intermarket financial PR firm 35 years ago with Martin Mosbacher, died Sept. 12 after a long illness. He was 68. He is remembered as an inspirational leader and mentor who developed many long-term relationships with clients, especially those operating in the capital markets offering trading-related goods and services.

Prior to launching Intermarket, Zachowski was VP-marketing at COMEX, metals futures exchange, where he launched options on futures contracts. He also was a precious metals analyst at EF Hutton & Co, which became part of Morgan Stanley.

UK-based [Lansons acquired Intermarket](#) in 2019.

In April, Josh Passman became CEO of Lansons Intermarket, succeeding the leadership team of CEO Zachowski and president Mosbacher. They became senior consultants.



Matt Zachowski

NEWS OF FIRMS

MMGY Global launches the MMGY Global Travel Marketing Collective, a worldwide alliance of locally based marketing agencies specializing in travel, tourism and hospitality. The collective is an evolution of the marketing agency network Travel Consul, which was founded in 2014. It will be focused on bringing together specialist agencies to offer marketing services ranging from representation and research to creative and integrated campaigns. Partners include Mexico City's Alchemia Communications Group, Singapore's BrandStory, Two Tone Global in Johannesburg and TMI Consultancy in Moscow.



Stagwell agencies **Assembly and ForwardPMX** are uniting as one organization and will operate globally under the Assembly name as part of the Stagwell Media Network. Assembly will be led by current ForwardPMX global CEO, James Townsend, who is also global CEO of Stagwell Media Network. Its management team will be a combination of Assembly and ForwardPMX leadership. The newly combined agency will be home to 1,500 employees in over 20 countries and 30 locations across the globe, working with such brands as Nike, Adobe, Ralph Lauren, Con Edison and Red Robin.

George P. Johnson, an events and experience marketing firm, acquires minority stake in its long-term partner, creative video agency **NOMOBO**. The agencies have collaborated on projects including IBM Think 2021, the Dodge Demon Launch, the Dreamforce Salesforce CNX and the Rodan & Fields Virtual Convention. The NOMOBO investment, which is being fostered by GPJ's holding company, Project, is focused on enabling GPJ to expand its cinematic approach to these types of events.

MEDIA MANEUVERS

News Corp is bringing Piers Morgan back to the airwaves as the centerpiece in its launch of talkTV, a British channel set to launch early next year. According to News Corp's British arm, News UK, the network "will be streamed live and made widely available on all platforms including linear TV and OTT with content available across social media as well as News UK's own broad inventory of websites and apps." In the US, Morgan's chat show will run on the Fox Nation streaming service, and it will appear on Sky News Australia. Morgan will also write a weekly column that will appear in *The Sun* and the *New York Post*.



Piers Morgan

Fox Corporation buys celebrity gossip brand **TMZ** from AT&T's WarnerMedia. TMZ co-founder Harvey Levin will stay on as managing editor. Fox will operate TMZ's main website, its culture site TooFab.com, its syndicated television programs and celebrity bus tours. "The unique and powerful brand Harvey has created in TMZ has forever changed the entertainment industry and we're excited to welcome them to Fox," Fox CEO Lachlan Murdoch said in a statement. TMZ is one of the assets that AT&T is selling as it prepares for the spinoff of WarnerMedia, which is to merge with Discovery.

COMMENTARY



Mark Zuckerberg had better rev up Facebook's PR machine since most people think his platform is shredding the First Amendment.

The Annenberg Public Policy Center's 2021 Constitution Day Civics Survey finds that more than six in ten (61 percent) of Americans incorrectly believe the First Amendment protection of free speech means that the social platform must permit everyone access to its pages. That includes rogue players such as former president Donald Trump.

There's broad support for that First Amendment fallacy. Two-thirds of conservatives, 61 percent of moderates and 55 percent of liberals believe FB must be a sounding board to all.

The First Amendment, of course, protects Americans from government censorship. It does not cover private companies.

Facebook banished Trump in the aftermath of the Jan. 6 insurrection for using it "to incite violent insurrection against a democratically elected government."

Zuckerberg did the right thing then and now must deal with the backlash.

Surprise, surprise. Cision, which distributes tens of thousands of press releases annually via its PR Newswire unit, believes that the trusty and somewhat musty old PR tool still makes sense in today's fast-paced communications world.

"Industry professionals agree press releases are still an incredibly powerful and valuable tool to connect to audiences," Nicole Guillot, Cision's COO, said in a press release distributed by PRN.

For its second annual "State of the Press Release Report," Cision analyzed more than 100,000 PRN releases and found that "announce" was the most widely used "action word" in the headline and news releases about DE&I and ESG are up. Those are hardly earth-shattering findings.

Cision promises to unveil more juicy details about its press release study during a webinar on Oct. 14.

It's nice work if you can get it. The Pentagon has spent more than \$14T since the terror attacks of 9/11. Thirty-three percent to 50 percent of that windfall went to military contractors, according to Brown University's Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs.

The reliance on private contractors in the post 9/11 period raises questions about accountability, transparency and effectiveness, wrote William Hartung of the Center for International Policy, in the "Profits of War: Corporate Beneficiaries of the Post-9/11 Pentagon Spending Spree" study released Sept. 13.

He believes privatization reduces Pentagon control over contracting and leads to waste, fraud, and abuse.

The Report highlights a quote from then-Boeing VP Harry Stonecipher, who told the *Wall Street Journal* in October 2001, "The purse is now open... Any member of Congress who doesn't vote for the funds we need to defend this country will be looking for a new job after next November."

Nice crystal ball, Harry.

Fox News is the big loser in Republican power grab that sought to boot California governor Gavin Newsom from office.

Rupert Murdoch's pride and joy gave excessive airtime to conservative firebrand & talk show host Larry Elder, which sucked the oxygen from other GOP hopefuls in the recall race.

Elder appeared 52 times in prime time on Fox, according to a report by Media Matters. No other GOP competitor appeared more than eight times.

While many disenchanting voters never would have voted for Trump wannabe Elder, they might have voted to oust Newsom in favor of a more moderate GOP candidate like ex-San Diego mayor Kevin Faulconer, a former executive at NCG Porter Novelli.

Fox-powered Elder topped the list of potential replacements, grabbing 46.9 percent of the tally. Real estate agent Kevin Paffrath, a self-described 51/49 percent Democrat-Republican, took second at 9.8 percent, and Faulconer came in third with 8.6 percent.

Newsom owes Fox. At the very least, he should invite Rupe to dinner at a restaurant that is not the French Laundry.

Bospar leads the way for PR firms dealing with the fallout of the Texas abortion ban, which may trigger a flight of young PR talent from the state.

The San Francisco technology shop is offering its six Austin employees, which account for 10 percent of its total workforce, relocation money if they feel the need to exit the Lonestar Star due to its restrictive new law.

Curtis Sparrer, principal at Bospar, told *O'Dwyer's* the firm is willing to spend \$10K per person and paid time off to leave Texas under what he calls a relocation or evacuation program. Bospar announced its plan Sept. 9, a day ahead of a similar plan by Salesforce.

Sparrer hopes other PR firms will follow his agency's lead in order to keep the abortion ban front and center in the national debate.

Hill+Knowlton Strategies, Real Chemistry, Edelman, Weber Shandwick, BCW and FleishmanHillard are among the major firms that have multiple offices in Texas.

The ball is in their court.

Congress has debated and attacked social media but has failed miserably to address the role that platforms play in fostering political polarization.

It's time for Joe Biden to step in, according to a report issued this month by the NYU|Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, which faults Congress for being "unable to overcome the very sort of dysfunction that is one of the consequences of extreme political division and distrust." Biden needs to tackle polarization in a "serious, deliberate" way.

The Report criticizes the president for oversimplifying a very serious problem when he makes flippant remarks such as saying Facebook is "killing people" by spreading misinformation about COVID-19 vaccinations.

Presidential leadership can begin to break the logjam in Congress and create a path to reform, according to the Report. Time is running out.

—Kevin McCauley