



**Kevin McCauley**  
Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's

## The Inside News of PR & Marketing Communications



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### BRANSON NEEDS DESTINATION MARKETING

Branson, MO, which bills itself as the nation's No. 1 family vacation spot, is looking for a firm to handle its \$2M annual destination marketing program.

The Ozark city boasts attractions such as the entertainment theaters along 76 Country Boulevard and Shepherd of the Hills Expressway, Dolly Parton's Stampede, Silver Dollar City, Hollywood Wax Museum Branson, Titanic Museum and the Branson Scenic Railway.



The RFP objectives are to attract overnight visitors, increase demand at hotels/motels/campgrounds and bolster

the number of people at local attractions.

The desired partner will be savvy in destination marketing disciplines including: advertising, PR, group/travel trade sales, corporate partnerships and promotions, direct marketing and fulfillment, and tourism development.

The contract will begin Jan. 1, 2021 and run through March 31, 2022. Branson has the option to renew the pact for four one-year terms.

Proposals are due Oct. 6. Branson is accepting electronic proposals at its designated electronic bidding platform, Demand Star.

Interested parties also may mail the original, three copies and a digital version of the proposal to:

City Hall; Attn: City Clerk Office; 110 W. Maddux Street, Suite 205; Branson, MO 65616

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

### CISION NAMES CLARK CEO

Cision has appointed Abel Clark chief executive officer, effective immediately. He takes over from Platinum Equity managing director Brandon Crawley, who was acting as interim CEO. Platinum acquired Cision in January.



**Abel Clark**

Clark was most recently CEO and Chairman of TruSight, a start-up that was established to transform third-party risk management. He was previously global managing director of Thomson Reuters' financial division.

"Since Platinum Equity's acquisition of Cision, our focus has been on unlocking the value potential of the business," said Crawley. "We are excited for Abel to help push this vision forward and confident that his customer-oriented approach and his extensive background in driving successful global growth strategies will be invaluable."

### GOP QUESTIONS SKDK'S 'VOTE SAFE' PACT

A trio of Republican Congressmen worry that California's awarding of a \$35M "Vote Safe" contract to SKD Knickerbocker, which boasts of being part of "Team Biden" represents a conflict of interest.

The contract to produce advertising to encourage voters to participate in the November election

"will undoubtedly provide a partisan firm the opportunity to use taxpayer money to influence the federal election," according to the letter sent to Alex Padilla, California's Secretary of State.



Kentucky's James Comer, Illinois' Rodney Davis, and Georgia's Jody Hice have serious concerns "about why the contract was awarded to a firm that has such an obvious interest in the outcome of a federal election."

They note that SKD Knickerbocker "does not hesitate to trumpet its relationship with Joe Biden's political campaign, highlighting in a bold graphic on its homepage its pride in being 'part of Team Biden.'" The firm's managing director, Anita Dunn, is a senior strategist on the campaign. The letter also notes SKD Knick was a target of a Russian hacking attempt.

SKD Knick, which is part of Stagwell Group, declined comment on the Republican letter.

### CAPUTO TAKES LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM HHS

Michael Caputo is taking a leave of absence from his top spokesperson job at the Dept. of Health and Human Services.

That move follows his Sept. 13 Facebook Live rant in which he lambasted career government scientists, alleged there is a "resistance unit" to Donald Trump housed within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and predicted political violence in the event the president wins re-election and Joe Biden fails to concede.

Caputo said he's undergoing "necessary screenings for a lymphatic issue discovered last week," according to his statement. Health concerns contributed to his "stress level, along with the increasing number of violent threats leveled at me and my family."



**Michael Caputo**

Trump installed Caputo, a political operative and author of "The Ukraine Hoax: How Decades of Corruption in the Former Soviet Republic Led to Trump's Phony Impeachment," in the assistant secretary of health for public affairs, to control the messaging of HHS.

Ryan Murphy, whom Caputo replaced as chief spokesperson, is returning to that position.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC HITS HEALTH INSURANCE

Health insurance coverage is taking a hit due to COVID-19, and the loss of coverage is coming down hardest on Black Americans and young people, according to a new survey from Finn Partners.



“The State of Health Insurance in COVID-19 America,” which was conducted by Civis Analytics, surveyed U.S. adults in February, June and September. It found that the rate of uninsured Americans rose 2.7

percent (to 14.7 percent) between February and September, adding 6.7 million people to the ranks of the uninsured.

For Black Americans the rise in the uninsured rate was much steeper, going from 17 percent in February to 26 percent in September. White Americans saw only a one percent jump, from 11 to 12 percent, in the same period.

The highest uninsured rate (27 percent) was found among people between 18 and 26, and those without a high school diploma.

Respondents to the September survey said that a big part of the overall jump in the number of uninsured Americans was caused by the pandemic. While eight percent of white respondents said that COVID-19 was behind their loss of insurance, that number rises to 10.4 percent for Black respondents. Almost a quarter (23 percent) of Black respondents who had lost their coverage due to COVID-19 remain uninsured.

Perhaps even more disturbing, many people who have lost their coverage say they are not making any plans to replace it. Almost half (46 percent) of currently uninsured respondents said they were not planning to purchase health insurance this year, up significantly from the 33 percent who said the same thing in February.

Most of those who remain insured (76 percent) said they have no plans to change their current coverage. That number was slightly lower for those who considered themselves to be in excellent health (65 percent) or poor health (72 percent).

## MAINE SEEKS PR AIMED AT OPIOID MOMS

The State of Maine has issued an RFP for strategic communications and outreach to pregnant women and mothers in treatment for and in recovery from Opioid Use Disorder.

The goal is to inform them of available support from Maine’s Maternal Opioid Model (MaineMOM) and other social service providers that can help this patient population.



The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services gave Maine \$5.3M earlier this year to participate in the MOM model, which aims to improve healthcare for pregnant and postpartum women with OUD and their infants. Nine other states got MOM funding.

Maine’s Dept. of Health and Human Services wants a firm to handle creative development of printed materials (no higher than a sixth-grade reading level) and other resources, as well as the design and implementation of a marketing campaign to include digital and social media, as appropriate, according to its RFP.

It plans to issue a two-year contract with options for two one-year renewals.

Proposals for the Maternal Opioid Model Outreach and Marketing RFP are due Sept. 29. They go to [Proposals@maine.gov](mailto:Proposals@maine.gov).

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

## ON THE MOVE

**Rubenstein Public Relations** has brought **Alyson Grala** back to the firm as vice president. Grala most recently was an account director, media relations & communications at Great Ink Communications. A former real estate journalist, she served as managing editor at GlobeSt.com for three years and associate editor at *License! Magazine*. During her previous tenure at Rubenstein PR, Grala was responsible for developing and executing initiatives on behalf of clients within the corporate and real estate industries. In her new post, she will be working with the corporate team to build brand exposure through strategic media relations and message development for a diverse portfolio of clients.



**Alyson Grala**

**PAN Communications** has named **Brandon Thomas** vice president & general manager, New York. Thomas comes to PAN from Red Havas North America, where he was associate vice president. He previously served as senior account director at Southard Communications. At PAN, Thomas will be strategic lead for clients across the agency’s technology and healthcare practices. He is also tasked with people management and development, workplace engagement and joining PAN’s leadership team on the agency’s DEI initiatives.

**Hill+Knowlton Strategies** has brought on **Alexa Vogel** as vice president, health, based in Toronto. Before coming to H+K, Vogel was account director, health at Edelman and a healthcare project consultant at APCO Worldwide. She has worked with clients in healthcare and pharmaceuticals across such therapeutic areas as oncology, women’s health, dermatology, infectious diseases, animal health and mental health.

Information technology and services company **Cologix** has named **Page Shaper Haun** chief marketing officer. Haun joins the company from Equinix, where she served as head of global brand strategy and content services. She was previously senior director of marketing, North and South America at Dolby Laboratories and corporate director of marketing at Charter Communications. At Cologix, Haun will lead marketing strategy, working to drive digital marketing, branding, sales enablement, demand generation and communications activities.

**Mazda North American Operations** has named **Brad Audet** chief marketing officer. Audet has been interim CMO since March. He was previously executive VP and general manager at Garage Team Mazda, WPP’s integrated marketing agency for the company. Before that, he was EVP of WPP-based Team Detroit, serving such clients as White Castle, United Way and Sports Authority. He has also worked at J. Walter Thompson Worldwide, McCann and BBDO. In his new role, Audet will lead a marketing organization focused on building Mazda’s brand value. “Brad stepped into the interim role at a challenging time for our industry as we were all figuring out how to navigate Covid-19,” said Mazda National Dealer Advisory Council chairman Jim McDonald. “He has been a good listener to the needs of dealers and has brought fresh perspective to Mazda’s marketing approach.”



**Brad Audet**

## **BUSINESS LOSS CHANGES FROM CARES ACT**

The PR industry faces major challenges in light of COVID-19. The Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act made changes to excess business losses. Some are retroactive and there may be opportunities for some PR agencies to file amended returns. The following may impact your agency.

### **Deferral of the excess business loss limits**

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provided that net tax losses from active businesses in excess of an inflation-adjusted \$500,000 for joint filers—or an inflation-adjusted \$250,000 for other covered taxpayers—are to be treated as Net Operating Loss carryforwards in the next tax year.



**Richard Goldstein**

The \$500,000 and \$250,000 limits, which are adjusted for inflation for the tax years beginning after calendar year 2018, were scheduled under the TCJA to apply to tax years beginning in calendar year 2018 to 2025. The CARES Act has retroactively postponed the limits so that they now apply to tax years beginning in calendar years 2021 to 2025.

The postponement means that you may be able to amend:

- Any filed 2018 tax returns that reflected a disallowed excess business loss (to allow the loss in 2018) and;
- Any filed 2019 tax return that reflects a disallowed 2019 loss and/or carryover of a disallowed 2018 loss (to allow the 2019 loss and/or eliminate the carryover).

### **Changes to the excess business loss limits**

The CARES Act made retroactive corrections to the excess business loss rules as they were stated in the 2017 TCJA.

Most importantly, the CARES Act clarified that deductions, gross income or gain attributable to employment aren't considered in calculating an excess business loss.

Another change: an excess business loss doesn't include any deduction under the tax code provisions involving the NOL deduction or the qualified business income deduction that effectively reduces income taxes on many businesses.

Because capital losses of non-corporations can't offset ordinary income under the NOL rules:

- Capital loss deductions are not considered in computing the excess business loss and;
- The amount of capital gain considered in computing the loss can't exceed the lesser of capital gain net income from a trade or business or capital gain net income.

### **What you need to know about payroll tax deferral**

The IRS released guidance on the payroll tax deferral from the Presidential Memorandum issued on August 8, 2020, which allows employers to defer withholding and payments of an employee's portion of the Social Security tax if that employee's wages are below a certain amount.

The deferral may apply only to employees receiving under \$4,000 during a biweekly pay period for wages paid from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, with each period considered separately.

Employers can defer the employee portion of the Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance tax under Sec. 3101(a) and Railroad Retirement Act Tier 1 tax under Sec. 3201. The due dates for withholding, and payment of these taxes is postponed until Jan. 1, 2021 and ends April 30, 2021. Interest, penalties and additions to tax will begin to accrue on unpaid taxes starting May 1, 2021.

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

## **TRADER JOE'S, AAA RANKED MOST AUTHENTIC**

Trader Joe's, AAA, Samsung, USAA and Target came out on top in Escalent's newly released Brand Authenticity Index.

Escalent, a human behavior and analytics firm, evaluated 32 top brands from the consumer and retail, financial services, technology and telecom industries, measuring each brand on five dimensions that it says predict and diagnose a brand's authenticity: thoughtful, transparent, reliable, committed and socially aware.

The result, based on a national survey of 1,000 consumers aged 18 and older from May 5 to 7, is intended to provide a data-driven, composite look at what it takes to win over consumers and engender strong brand loyalty through genuine messaging and action in alignment with intrinsic brand values.

"The companies that performed well in our initial surveys go beyond the talk—they live and breathe their values," said Jill Miller, vice president of Escalent's consumer & retail practice.

## **BOB DOLE HELPS ARMENIA BOOST US TIES**

Former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, 97, is working with Armenia to improve its diplomatic relations with the US ahead of strategic talks between the two nations slated for October.

His firm, Alston & Bird, will monitor current events relevant to US-Armenia relations and may conduct outreach to Congress and the Trump administration.

Dole, a special counsel at A&B, was president Jerry Ford's VP running mate in 1976 and the Republican presidential nominee in 1996.

The US embassy in Armenia's capital of Yerevan advised US citizens to avoid travel to the eastern part of the country near the border with Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani forces killed an Armenian soldier on Sept. 16. Armenia's Defense Ministry has ordered its troops to maintain high-combat readiness.



**Bob Dole**

## **MWWPR WORKS SPORTBLX LAUNCH**

MWWPR has been retained by SportBLX to lead communications for the launch of a platform that allows fans and investors to own shares of unique assets in sports.

The agency will lead brand-building focused public relations through media relations and financial communications, and handle all communications and executions surrounding athlete partners and ambassadors.

On the platform, athletes can agree to sell a certain percentage of their on-field/court earnings or to contribute fixed amounts over a certain period of time. In the case of a team, an owner agrees to sell a percentage of equity. After SportBLX creates fractional interests in either the athlete's earnings or the team's equity, the shares are listed and sold on the SportBLX platform.

"The blending of sports and investment worlds is a complex intersection, and MWWPR's unique depth of expertise in both is the perfect complement to our goal of making sports ownership accessible to everyone," said SportBLX co-founder Joseph De Perio.

SportBLX joins FanDuel and the Professional Fighters League on MWWPR's sports and entertainment roster.

## **BROCKMAN EXITS WARNERMEDIA**

Kevin Brockman, who joined WarnerMedia Entertainment as VP global communications in May 2019, is exiting at the end of the year.



**Kevin Brockman**

He joined the AT&T unit after 22 years at Walt Disney Co, where he left as executive VP-global communications at Disney/ABC Television Group in charge of news/entertainment/corporate PR, as well as CSR, talent relations and events.

Brockman took the WarnerMedia Entertainment job to handle HBO, TBS, Cinemax and direct-to-consumer streaming and report to then-chairman Bob Greenblatt. WarnerMedia CEO Jason Kilar ousted Greenblatt last month.

"I joined WarnerMedia to work with Bob Greenblatt and to take on the challenges he presented to me at the start," Brockman said in a statement.

He called the launch of HBO Max "a personal highlight."

## **CROSSROADS REPS GUARDIAN DISASTER FIRM**

Former Senators John Breaux (D-LA) and Trent Lott (R-MS) have signed on to represent Guardian Centers of Georgia, disaster preparedness and tactical training outfit.

Their firm, Crossroads Strategies, is lobbying to advance the value of operational readiness and security training in areas including chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive response.

Crossroads executive VP Scott Brenner, who was chief of external affairs at the Office of Science and Technology at the Dept. of Homeland Security, joins the former Senators on the Guardian business. Geoff Burkart, a 30-year veteran of AT&T, is founder and CEO of Guardian. He launched the company following his work in emergency management and response as aviation director at BellSouth during the Sept. 11 attacks and airlift operations during hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Breaux and Lott exited Breaux Lott Leadership Group in July. They sold that firm to Squire Patton Boggs in 2010.

Crossroads also picked up the Nissan North America account, which spent \$300K at BLLG during the first half of 2020, on Sept. 1.

## **WAGENSELLER RETURNS TO SIGNAL**

Shelby Wagenseller, who was deputy COO of the 2020 Democratic National Convention Committee as well as senior communications advisor for the Milwaukee Host Committee, has been named vice president of Signal Group's communications practice.



**Shelby Wagenseller**

Wagenseller was previously a senior communications manager at Signal. She has also served as deputy press secretary at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and worked on the 2016 Democratic National Convention Committee. She was a field organizer in President Obama's 2012 campaign.

"Shelby is a total pro when it comes to high profile brand and policy communications in Washington or around the country," Signal Group COO Jessica Rihani.

## **FOX NEWS SLICES ALMOST 3% OF WORKERS**

Fox News is restructuring its business operations, a move that will trim almost three percent of its workforce.

"As Fox News Media has evolved into a streamlined multi-platform organization, we are realigning several functions and restructuring various divisions in order to position all of our businesses for ongoing success," the network said in a statement.

No cuts will be made to on-air talent.

*Deadline* reports the cutbacks due to COVID-19 are on the hair and make-up department.

Fox Corp. suffered a 73.3 percent decline in Q4 (ended June) net to \$122M on a four percent dip in revenues to \$2.4B. Ad revenues fell 22 percent at the FOX Television Stations. There also were fewer live events at FOX Sports and fewer hours of scripted programming at FOX Entertainment due to the pandemic.

CEO Lachan Murdoch remains upbeat. "We entered the COVID-19 crisis on sound operational and financial footing and we expect to emerge from this pandemic more competitive, more focused and even more strongly positioned to deliver value," he said.



## **MEDIA MANEUVERS**

Cablevision founder **Charles Dolan** is stepping down as executive chairman of AMC Networks, and will become chairman emeritus. Dolan has led the AMC Networks board ever since the company was spun off from Cablevision in 2011. His son James L. Dolan, who is also executive chairman of The Madison Square Garden Company and MSG Networks (both Cablevision spinoffs), will succeed him. When the Dolans sold Cablevision to the European telecom company Altice in 2016 they retained control of the AMC Networks and Madison Square Garden businesses. The Dolan family currently controls about 70 percent of the voting shares in AMC Networks.



**Charles Dolan**

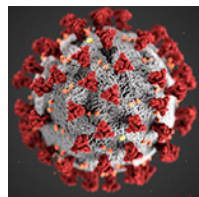
**Red Ventures**, which includes such digital brands as Healthline, Bankrate and Reviews.com, says it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire CNET Media Group from ViacomCBS for \$500 million. In addition to technology news brand CNET, CNET Media Group includes ZDNet, a leader in B2B focused content and Gamespot, a games information brand, as well as TVGuide, Metacritic and Chowhound. CNET Media Group executive VP and general Mark Larkin and his senior team will remain in place after the acquisition.

**Marie Claire** editor-in-chief Aya Kanai is leaving to join Pinterest in the newly created role of head of content and editorial partnerships. According to *WWD*, Kanai's departure was not expected by Hearst management. Before coming to Marie Claire, she served as chief fashion director for a group of Hearst publications that included *Cosmopolitan* and *Redbook*. Kanai had only been at Marie Claire since January, when she succeeded Anne Fulenwider, who left to build a start-up dedicated to women's health. Sally Holmes, **Marie Claire's** digital director, will be taking over from Kanai. Holmes was previously executive editor at Elle.com.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE BATTERS US IMAGE

The Trump administration's mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic has battered America's image overseas, according to the Pew Research Center.

The Center's Sept. 15 survey of 13 allied and partner nations finds the share of the public with a positive view of America is as low as it has been at any point since it began polling on this topic about 20 years ago.



Only 41 percent of the British view the US favorably, while France's 31 percent rating matches that of March 2003, at the height of US-France tensions due to the Iraq War. A little more than a quarter (26 percent) of Germans have a positive view of the US.

The US mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic is a major reason for the declining image, according to Pew.

The Japanese (25 percent) top the list when it comes to "confidence in Trump."

Australia is next at 23 percent followed by Canada (20 percent), UK (19 percent), Netherlands (18 percent) and South Korea (17 percent), Spain and Italy (16 percent), Sweden (15 percent) and France (11 percent).

Pew found that Trump is less trusted than the leaders of Germany, France, UK, Russia and China. Only 16 percent of respondents believe Trump "would do the right thing regarding world affairs," compared to 83 percent who expressed no confidence in the US president to do the right thing.

Germany's Angela Merkel has the highest marks as 76 percent of those polled have confidence in her while 19 percent have no confidence.

Pew also polled Americans on Trump's handling of COVID-19 messaging and gave him poor marks.

Nearly six-in-ten (57 percent) believe Trump has been delivering the wrong message about the pandemic and two-thirds say his administration "only sometimes or hardly ever gets the facts right about the outbreak."

Americans consider the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other public health organizations the most trusted source when it comes to COVID-19. Fifty-seven percent of Pew's respondents say they get it right either most or almost of the time.

## AFFECT RECRUITS DOBRZELECKI

Jen Dobrzelecki, a more than 20-year PR veteran, has joined Affect technology, healthcare and professional services firm as senior VP.



**Jen Dobrzelecki**

She founded and led the New York office of Lewis Global Communications. She was previously the U.S. head for M&C Saatchi PR, and has served as executive director at Golin and vice president at CKPR.

Dobrzelecki built and managed teams for clients across such sectors as technology, health and wellness, food and beverage and consumer goods.

"Jen is an accomplished and admired PR leader who also has the hustle and grit that we value at Affect. She is joining the company at an opportune time to help us elevate our team and our work on behalf of our clients," said Affect president and founder Sandra Fathi.

## GROWING ARIZONA CITY WANTS TOURISM PR

The fast-growing Arizona City of Avondale is looking for a PR firm with destination marketing expertise.

Located just 15 miles from downtown Phoenix, Avondale's population has soared 16 percent to 88K since 2010.

Avondale believes it has reached a point in its development "where attention can now be directed to the growing tourism industry." The city provides easy access to Cactus League training sites of nine Major League Baseball teams, while State Farm Stadium, home of the NFL's Arizona Cardinals and the Fiesta Bowl, is in nearby Glendale.

The desired partner will develop a tourism and destination strategic plan which will guide the strategies, goals and direction of destination marketing efforts of the City for the next five years.

The one-year contract comes with options for four successive one-year renewals.

Proposals are due Oct. 8. Interested parties must download attached forms at <https://vendorregistry.com> before submitting proposals.

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

## NYWIC TO HOST 50TH MATRIX AWARDS

New York Women in Communications is holding its 50th annual Matrix Awards as a virtual event on Oct. 12. The awards recognize women leaders who exemplify excellence, the courage to break boundaries and a commitment to championing the next generation of trailblazers, creatives and communicators.

This year's event, which will be emceed by "CBS This Morning" co-host and *The Oprah Magazine* editor-at-large Gayle King, honors a group of women that includes CBS News president Susan Zirinsky, Adobe executive vice president and chief marketing officer Ann Lewnes and Times Up Now & Times Up Foundation CEO Tina Tchen. For more information or to register, [click here](#).



## ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

**Motion** has been enlisted by **Prevent Child Abuse America** to spearhead its 2021 national campaign/brand messaging development. The effort will include targeted research, creative conceiving, strategy development, social, content and public relations services. Motion is also working with the **Illinois Soybean Association** to help increase awareness and educate state residents about the critical importance of the Illinois Inland Waterways as a transportation route and the environmental and economic benefits of biodiesel, created using soybean oil.

**Uproar PR** has been chosen as agency of record for **Smashing Grapes**, a restaurant opening in Annapolis, Maryland, and **Ike's Love & Sandwiches**, a California sandwich shop which is expanding to the east coast and preparing to open in South Florida. The agency will work to raise awareness for both brands.

**Brandstyle Communications** has been named agency of record for British women's ready-to-wear and outerwear brand **MARFA STANCE** and **Kostumed**, a website that sells costumes for dogs, cats and adults. Brandstyle's work for both clients will be focused on earned media relations.

# COMMENTARY



**Donald Trump besmirches the image of PR** by complaining that his “phenomenal” job in handling the coronavirus is not getting the credit that he so richly deserves only because his communications team got “outplayed” by his opponents.

But Trump isn’t getting credit because Americans know that he’s been a disaster in the response to COVID-19.

The president doesn’t understand the role of PR, which is to communicate truthful messages to targeted audiences. PR isn’t spin or pitching lies as truths.

Even Ed Bernays, the father of PR, could not position the deaths of 200K Americans as a COVID-19 success story.

Trump, though, keeps on digging a bigger hole for himself. On Twitter, he had the nerve to compare his administration’s response to the pandemic to the Obama White House’s handling of H1N1. He tweeted Sept. 18:

“Biden FAILED BADLY with the Swine Flu. It was the Gang That Couldn’t Shoot Straight”. He didn’t have a clue. We have done an incredible job with the much tougher China Virus!”

Trump’s COVID-19 gang is more of a circular firing squad, and when it comes to Swine Flu and COVID-19, the numbers—unlike Trump—don’t lie.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 12,469 Americans lost their lives to H1N1 from April 2009 to 2010.

America’s COVID-19 losses for the nine-month (March to Sept.) tops the 200K mark. The US, which has four percent of the world’s population, accounts for 21 percent of the 961K COVID-19 death toll. That’s a national disgrace.

What’s Trump’s next move? Since he fingered then-VP Joe Biden for failing to counter H1N1, is he going to blame VP Mike Pence for the disastrous response to COVID-19?

**Hats off to Trump for finally getting the gang at *Scientific American*** to gather the gumption to [endorse a presidential candidate](#). It’s their first endorsement in the magazine’s 175 years.

The endorsement though isn’t for the tweeter-in-chief who has “badly damaged the U.S. and its people—because he rejects evidence and science,” according to SA.

The editorial board wants Joe Biden in the White House because of his “fact-based plans to improve the nation’s health, economy and environment.”

It rips Trump for his “dishonest and inept response” to the COVID-19 pandemic that has cost the lives of more than 200K Americans and for attacking environmental protections, medical care, researchers and public science agencies that help this country prepare for its greatest challenges.

The SA editors write:

“Trump repeatedly lied to the public about the deadly threat of the disease, saying it was not a serious concern

and “[this is like a flu](#)” when he knew it was more lethal and highly transmissible, according to his taped statements to journalist Bob Woodward. His lies encouraged people to engage in risky behavior, spreading the virus further, and have [driven wedges between Americans](#) who take the threat seriously and those who believe Trump’s falsehoods.

The White House even produced a [memo attacking the expertise of the nation’s leading infectious disease physician, Anthony Fauci](#), in a despicable attempt to sow further distrust.”

The president’s reaction to America’s worst public health crisis in a century has been to say, “I don’t take responsibility at all.”

Instead, he blamed other countries and his White House predecessor, who left office three years before the pandemic began.”

Trump has repeatedly tried to get rid of the Affordable Care Act while offering no alternative, proposed billion-dollar cuts to the [National Institutes of Health](#), the National Science Foundation, and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and wants the US out of the World Health Organization.

The president keeps pushing to [eliminate health rules](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency and replacing replaced scientists on agency advisory boards with industry representatives.

SA editors write: “In his ongoing denial of reality, Trump has hobbled U.S. preparations for climate change, [falsely claiming that it does not exist](#) and pulling out of international agreements to mitigate it. The changing climate is already causing a rise in [heat-related deaths](#) and an increase in severe storms, wildfires and extreme flooding.”

Though Trump and his cronies are trying to create obstacles that prevent voters from casting their ballots, SA urges Americans to overcome all challenges and vote.

“It’s time to move Trump out and elect Biden, who has a record of following the data and being guided by science,” concludes the editorial.

Will the president retaliate by canceling his sub to SA?

**Just what the US needs...** Public Relations Student Society of America’s 2021 Bateman Case Study Competition will focus on promoting civility in the national conversation.

“The pervasiveness of incivility and the incalculable toll it takes on the economic, social, physical and emotional well-being of all Americans beg for the intervention of communications professionals,” Jon Goldberg, PRSA Civility Tasks Force co-Chair, said in a statement.

Goldberg said there will be a national strategic campaign to restore quality, integrity and inclusiveness to public discourse in all its forms, wherever it takes place.

The competition is open to the more than 370 PRSSA-affiliated chapters. It is named after J. Carroll Bateman, past president of PRSA and a driving force in the creation of the student group.

—Kevin McCauley