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NM INSURANCE EXCHANGE NEEDS PR

New Mexico Health Insurance Exchange is looking for a firm to increase awareness and understanding of individuals and business about the options available in its beWellnm coverage.

The RFP calls for a mix of PR, advertising, media outreach and website management geared to engaging the Land of Enchantment's diverse population, especially Hispanic and Native American people.



The desired partner will help New Mexico's Dept. of Health's refocus its priority "on face-to-face consumer engagement through creative outreach and

education activities that achieve the stated beWellnm goals in a cost-effective, efficient manner," according to the RFP.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak BeWellnm "desires new and innovative methods of outreach to consumers and nimble education strategies that don't merely address health insurance coverage, but public health programs, changes to benefits to address a pandemic, and evidence-based recommendation."

Proposals are due Oct. 12 and must be sent electronically to RFP@nmhix.com.
[Download RFP \(PDF\)](#).

BRUNSWICK TAPS FB, GOOGLE ALUM FROST

Brunswick Group has added Debbie Frost as a senior advisor in its San Francisco office to counsel technology companies in Silicon Valley and beyond.

Frost did an 11-year stint at Facebook, exiting in 2019 as VP of international and policy communications and a member of the executive leadership team. As international communications head at Google, she helped launch AdWords and Gmail, and led media strategy for legal, policy and other corporate issues, including the launch of Google in China.



Debbie Frost

Earlier, Frost handled European communications at Nike and began her career at Burson-Marsteller.

At Brunswick, she will focus on communications, corporate reputation and PA strategies in areas such as privacy, data protection and global regulatory matters.

Ash Spiegelberg, Brunswick SF head, said Frost's experience will "be of huge value to our technology clients at every stage of their lifecycle."

W2O ACQUIRES ELYSIA GROUP

W2O, the No. 1 ranked independent healthcare PR firm, has acquired Elysia Group, an economic and outcomes research outfit based in New York.

Elysia, which has offices in Taipei and Shanghai, provides modeling approaches to help pharmaceutical and medical device companies gauge cost-effectiveness, market sizing, forecasting and portfolio analysis.



Bruce Wang, Elysia CEO/co-founder, and Wesley Furnback, president/co-founder, join W2O as health economics and real-world evidence practice leaders.

They report to Rita Glaze, W2O's commercial strategy and market access practice leader.

Elysia will work closely with W2O's Discern Health unit, which counsels clients on performance measures and innovative payment models that shape the market for their products and services.

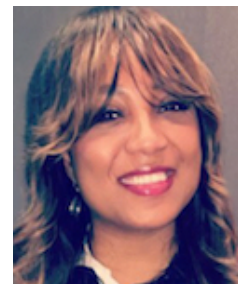
The Elysia deal is W2O's seventh acquisition since it announced a partnership in 2019 with New Mountain Capital.

W2O registered \$218.9M in healthcare fees in 2019, according to O'Dwyer's ranking of PR firms.

BCW PROMOTES POLY CULTURAL CONSULTING

BCW has launched the BCW Polycultural Consulting Unit, which will help clients understand, connect with and move diverse stakeholder audiences. The unit considers an audience's multidimensional and sometimes fluid markers of identity, as well as highly differentiated life experiences and specific views on racial and societal issues.

It is based on what the agency calls the "three key pillars of identity"—cultural heritage (including race, ethnicity, traditions and language), cultural status (which considers such factors as lifestyle, sexual orientation, education and class/income) and cultural zeitgeist (which takes factors including art, economics, fashion, pop culture and vernacular into account). Insights gained from this audience analysis will then be applied across offerings that range from research and strategy to internal and external communications programs.



Kristin Hooper

"Brands and organizations that overlook connecting with polycultural America now risk losing their relevance with an audience that is only going to continue to grow," said BCW Polycultural Consulting Unit lead Kristin Hooper.

RUDER FINN ACQUIRES JACOBSTAHL

Ruder Finn has acquired full-service public relations firm jacobstahl to anchor the re-launch of Bloom, its incubator agency, as well as Bloom Health, which focuses on the healthcare sector.



The group will be consolidated under the name jacobstahl, a Bloom company, and be managed by jacobstahl partners Sandra Stahl and Jeremy Jacob, both of whom started their careers at Ruder Finn.

Founded in 2003, jacobstahl works with major health-care multinationals and start-ups. Last year it launched ISSUES360, a dedicated practice providing clients with communications solutions for issues with global and in-market implications for a brand's ecosystem, corporate reputation, internal culture and sales organization.

"With jacobstahl at the helm, Bloom has the leadership and vision to develop and deliver what's next in healthcare and corporate communications," said Ruder Finn CO Kathy Bloomgarden.

NOKIA DIALS UP STATE DEPT'S KOH

Finnish telecom giant Nokia has recruited the State Dept's Grace Koh for its US government relations department.

As US ambassador to the 2019 International Telecom Union's World Radiocommunication Conference in Egypt, she led the 125-member American delegation negotiating spectrum and satellite policy.



Grace Koh

Koh also served as special assistant to the president for technology, telecom and cybersecurity policy in the White House and deputy chief counsel to the House Energy and Commerce Committee's subcommittee on communications and technology.

Brian Hendricks, Nokia's VP-government relations Americas, said that Koh's extensive experience and background in the "cross-section of geopolitics, technology and trade will ensure our expertise continues to be respected in the policy debates both domestically and abroad," he added.

SKDKNICK POWERS NAACP'S VOTING DRIVE

SKDKnickerbocker handled NAACP's "Power of 5—Community Voter Outreach Program" to distribute informational materials on voting in areas with high concentrations of Black people.

The program, which ran from Sept. 18-22, was part of NAACP's effort to increase Black voter turnout by at least five percent over the 2016 election by focusing on "low-intensity voters."

The "no-contact canvassing initiative" targeted voters in 15 cities in 13 states and DC. They include Birmingham, Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Houston and Las Vegas.

"The Power of 5 program aims to inform, engage and empower Black voters and make sure they have the tools and resources they need to make their voices heard at the ballot — because quite simply, our lives depend on it," said Derrick Johnson, NAACP president.

Mark Penn's Stagwell Group owns SKDKnick.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

CerconeBrown has been named agency of record for **Purecane**, an all-natural sweetener that's derived from sugarcane grown sustainably in Brazil. The agency will support Purecane on all media initiatives, and will help with digital marketing, including social strategy and management across all social channels and thought leadership campaigns on LinkedIn. The company is launching several brands this fall, including Purecane Baking Sweetener, Purecane Packets and Purecane Spoonable Family Canister.



King + Company has been retained as agency of record by entrepreneurial health and lifestyle brands **XED Beverages, Inc.** and **BrainCool AB**. It will work with XED Beverages on the launch of SESH, a product that the company says sits at the intersection of the two fastest-growing segments of the alcohol industry: ready-to-drink cocktails and flavored malt beverage hard seltzers. For Swedish tech company BrainCool AB, King + Company will coordinate the European launch of its Cooral System for the prevention of Oral Mucositis in cancer patients, and will manage strategic public relations initiatives for other devices.

Rainier Communications has been appointed agency of record for **OnwardMobility**, which has licensed the BlackBerry brand to build secure 5G smartphones. The agency launched OnwardMobility from stealth mode on Aug. 19. Rainier was initially selected to announce the licensing partnerships that allow the company to bring the BlackBerry-branded smartphones to market early next year.

PAN Communications has been named agency of record for virtual hiring event and online career fair software brand **Brazen**. Starting with targeted media relations, executive thought leadership and analyst relations programs, PAN will work with Brazen's marketing team to deliver brand visibility around key topics and themes within the human resources, talent acquisition and technology industries. The agency will then help expand Brazen's executive thought leadership bench.

Diffusion has been selected as agency of record by **Facet Wealth**, a startup dedicated to democratizing access to certified financial planners for everyday Americans. Diffusion will provide corporate and consumer support for the company, raising awareness and credibility for the brand. The agency's campaign will employ an always-on media relations engine designed to interject Facet Wealth's expertise and point-of-view into trending personal finance topics. Additionally, Diffusion's campaign will create content for Facet Wealth utilizing original data that demonstrates how the current climate is actively altering American financial priorities, among other related topics.



Firecracker PR has added **Avatier**, a provider of identity governance and administration, and **Voxox**, which offers unified cloud communication solutions for businesses, to its roster of clients in the software-as-a-service sector. For Avatier, Firecracker will execute comprehensive media relations and content marketing campaigns. The agency's services for Voxox will include integrated media relations campaigns with social media management.

TWO BIG “IFS” COULD REELECT TRUMP

The single most astonishing “revelation” of Bob Woodward’s published “Rage” against Donald Trump is that nobody much cared. While journalists breathlessly hailed the Woodward hatchet job as a “bombshell,” most Americans received it as just another example of “Trump being Trump.”

The fact is that a bit more than half of all Americans despise Trump and a bit less than half accept him; no matter what Bob Woodward or anyone else tells them.

Which brings us to the November election and the incumbent’s uphill, last-ditch climb to erase the sticky seven-point poll lead that Joe Biden has hung onto for months.



Fraser Seitel

With a little more than a month to go, it’s unlikely that Trump can pull it off. But it’s not impossible.

For one thing, Trump’s opponent is a pitifully weak candidate, whose advisers—like Trump’s—get apoplectic every time he ventures off-script.

Biden, at 77, has lost more than a step. His factual recall is limited. He tends to speak in vague generalities and gets confused with specifics. And

his obvious antipathy to his opponent is so severe—and so sincere—that the frequently flappable Biden may “flap” even more—to his detriment—if goaded by Trump.

So, even though Trump himself isn’t terribly articulate or knowledgeable and is also prone to fly off the handle at the slightest slight, his best chance to run roughshod over his feeble challenger may lie in the three scheduled debates.

Biden will be particularly challenged in the first debate, moderated by Fox News’ Chris Wallace, who will pepper the former Vice President on all matter of embarrassing questions. Trump, on the other hand, just conducted a White House interview with Wallace, so he’s more experienced in handling the Fox reporter’s take-no-prisoners persistence.

Trump’s greatest debate challenge will be the last one, moderated by Kristen Welker of NBC, who has carried her network’s anti-Trump banner as White House correspondent for the past several years. Trump will likely use the debate forum to spar with Welker and challenge her motives, as he has done regularly at White House COVID briefings.

Challenging a hostile media—may provide another route to help the incumbent eke out another improbable victory.

First, the nation’s trust in the media has steadily eroded. According to the 2020 Knight Foundation-Gallup survey, a whopping 86 percent of Americans detect either “a great deal” or a “fair amount” of political bias in news coverage.

Second, as the presidential campaign has worn on, an increasing number of once-respected media outlets—particularly CNN and the *New York Times*—have surrendered any pretense of “objectivity” as far as Trump is concerned.

So, third, if the Knight-Gallup findings are to be believed, and 80 percent of Americans perceive inaccurate news to be “intentional,” it’s entirely likely that swing voters in these crucial swing states may resent that outlets like the Times and CNN so blatantly bias their coverage to defeat Trump.

Again, with the clock winding down, the smart money is still on Biden to end America’s most chaotic Presidency.

Nonetheless, because Biden is so fundamentally weak, the election promises to be close. And if Trump can trip up the challenger in the debates, and if swing state fence-sitters find an increasingly-biased media intolerable—admittedly,

two big “ifs”—then don’t count out another Donald Trump election surprise in November.

Fraser P. Seitel has been a communications consultant, author and teacher for 40 years. He is author of the Pearson text “The Practice of Public Relations,” now in its 14th edition, and co-author of “Rethinking Reputation” and “Idea Wise.” He may be reached directly at yusake@aol.com.

LAW FOR BLACK LIVES LOOKING FOR PR FIRM

Law for Black Lives, a national network of lawyers, law students and legal workers, is looking for an agency that can provide communications services.

L4BL is seeking an agency passionate about working with non-profits that can promote the organization’s work among supporters, members and donors and position it as a thought leader in the field of movement lawyering, radical policy and as a unique political home for attorneys and legal workers.

Scope of the services includes conducting research and interviews to determine audiences; reviewing and updating existing images and messaging, communications strategy and brand elements; developing a communications strategy; providing communication guidance and enacting a plan for reaching communication goals; updating the brand’s visual identity; website design; and creating metrics for communications strategy evaluation.

Terms of the contract run from November 2020-January 2021 and comes with a proposed budget between \$25,000-45,000.

Deadline for proposals is October 18. All proposals should be emailed to info@law4blacklives.org with “RFP/FIRM NAME” in the subject line.

Questions should be directed to executive director Marbre Stahly-Butts, marbre@law4blacklives.org.

[View the RFP.](#)



AVISA ADDS SIGNAL GROUP’S PROCTER

Avisa Partners has brought John Procter on as a partner in its DC office.

He joins Avisa from Signal Group, where he most recently served as managing partner and chair of the firm’s communications practice.

Procter was previously executive VP at McBee Strategic Consulting, senior VP at Gibraltar Associates, director at DCI Group and press officer/spokesperson for the Coalition Provisional Authority during the Iraq War.

In his new position, he will add international brand management, policy communications and transnational dispute expertise to Avisa’s offerings.

“John’s track record of delivering results for multinationals, sovereigns and other global institutions aligns perfectly with Avisa’s focus on managing client risks and sensitive political, regulatory, public debate, legal, commercial and reputation issues,” said Avisa Partners US chief executive officer Eric Bovim.

Founded in France in 2010, Avisa expanded into the US last year and has added offices in Brussels, London and Berlin, as well as acquiring Paris-based risk management consultancy CEIS.



John Procter

FOX CORP. SLASHES MURDOCHS' PAY

Fox Corp. slashed the 2020 compensation of chairman Rupert Murdoch and his executive chairman/CEO son, Lachlan, in the aftermath of the sale of its entertainment assets to Walt Disney Co. in March 2019.



Rupert Murdoch

Rupert took a 19.3 percent cut to \$33.4M, while Lachlan suffered a 30.8 percent drop to \$29.2M, according to Fox's proxy statement for the Nov. 12 annual meeting at the Zanuck Theatre at the Fox Studio Lot in Los Angeles.

The document hails 89-year-old Rupert as "the driving force behind the evolution of the Company from the single, family-owned Australian newspaper he took over in 1953 to the global public media and entertainment company that was 21st Century Fox and that, through his vision and efforts, he most recently transformed into the focused news, sports and entertainment company that is FOX today."

The pay package of Lachlan, 49, stacks up against the total \$81,301 compensation of the median Fox employee, a 359 to 1 ratio.

Fox's fiscal 2020 (ended June) revenues jumped eight percent to \$12.3B. Net income fell 37.3 percent to \$999M.

KEKST CNC GUIDES BIG 'BLANK CHECK' DEAL

Kekst CNC advised United Wholesale Mortgage as it becomes a public company via the biggest special purpose acquisition deal ever, with a market valuation of \$16B.

UWM, the nation's No. 1 wholesale mortgage lender, is merging with Gores Holding IV, a SPAC that raised \$425M in its January public listing.

The Pontiac, MI-based company, which was founded in 1986, has about 7,000 employees and chalked up an adjusted net income of \$1.7B.

CEO Mat Ishbia said being a public company will enable UWM to advance its strategy and capitalize on new opportunities under its unique family culture.

Kekst CNC's Daniel Yunger, Jim Fingerroth, Dawn Dover, Lindsay Gross, Simone Leung and Natalie Shutts worked the deal.

Publicis Groupe owns Kekst CNC.

SPADACCINI LEAVES TIMEWARNER

Chris Spadaccini is exiting his post as chief marketing officer at WarnerMedia Entertainment. Spadaccini is the latest in a wave of departures from WarnerMedia resulting from a major revamp of the company led by CEO Jason Kilar, who came on board in May.



Chris Spadaccini

Before assuming the CMO spot in 2019, Spadaccini had been with HBO since 1999, most recently serving as EVP, marketing. His duties will be divided up between several company employees.

Kilar's restructuring is intended to merge WarnerMedia's content creation into one operation, with "efficiencies" expected to follow. It will also create a separate focus on HBO Max, which is expected to assume a pivotal role in the company's future.

NEWS OF FIRMS

Lambert & Co. is the lead investor in the recently launched TiiCKER, Inc., an intelligent software platform that engages, verifies and rewards individual investors through integrated content, stock perks and zero-commission trading.

The platform enables publicly traded companies and their brands to gain new access to the high-potential demographic hidden in their retail shareholder base. By linking dozens of online brokerages to the platform and leveraging TiiCKER's stock trading partner, Tradier, to provide free trading, individual investors are able to view their investments and perks all in one place.

"We created TiiCKER specifically to convert the 56 million retail investors in the U.S. to consumers, while transforming consumers into shareholders in the brands they love," said Lambert CEO and TiiCKER founder Jeff Lambert.

Bolt PR has been acquired by **Millwright Holdings**, an independent marketing services holding company. The acquisition is intended to give Millwright new strength in consumer and lifestyle PR, communications strategy, influencer marketing, and digital marketing. Bolt founder and president Caroline Callaway will retain her position and Jo-Anne Coombes will remain vice president. Bolt, which provides brand positioning, digital and social strategy, media relations, influencer marketing and crisis communications for clients in the packaged goods, consumer technology, hospitality, fashion and beauty, finance, education, B2B services, health and fitness, and food and beverage categories. has offices in Dallas, Pittsburgh, Raleigh and Orange County, CA.

Edelman has announced the US launch of Edelman CommsTech Solutions, an offering that leverages technology, tools, data and analytics to provide actionable intelligence for communicators. The offering is focused on helping clients target, measure and shape trust and behavior at the individual level. The CommsTech team includes more than 50 client advisors, data scientists, analysts, technologists and developers. Services the team provides include advisory services and custom technology products that help executives modernize their in-house communications departments. "Our people-centric approach to CommsTech is going to revolutionize the communications industry just like Martech has done for marketing services," said Yannis Kotziagkouridis, chief data and analytics officer and head of Edelman data & intelligence. Clients who are already using Edelman's CommsTech programs include Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Hologic Inc.

Landis Communications, which will celebrate its 30th anniversary in October, has launched its #30for30 campaign, which will consist of donations to 30 (+1 for good measure) nonprofits nominated by LCI staffers. Each charity will receive a \$300 donation and a special shout out across LCI's social media platforms. The team also will be giving back to the community through a variety of activities. In addition, LCI will host a special #3for30 series on its YouTube channel, in which founder and CEO David Landis will conduct short interviews with clients past and present about memories of working with the firm.



MO COUNTY NEEDS DRUG PROGRAM REBRAND

Jackson County, MO, which includes Kansas City, wants proposals to rebrand its Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax (COMBAT) Commission.

Launched in 1989 and funded with a .25 percent sales tax, COMBAT's mission is to create a "safe community for its residents free from the dangers of illegal drugs and violent crime." Jackson County wants to rebrand COMBAT and possibly change the program's name.



The desired partner will create "buy-in" for the possible new name and logo through surveys and focus groups.

It will create different branding messages for prevention, treatment, criminal justice and law enforcement audiences and develop a social media campaign.

The original and five copies of the proposal are due Oct. 20. They are to be sent in a sealed opaque envelope with the proposal number 49-20 written on the outside to: Office of the Jackson County Purchasing Department; Room G-1, Ground Floor; Jackson County Courthouse; 415 East 12th Street; Kansas City, Missouri 64106

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

SLOANE & CO. RISES TO DEFENSE OF CUBIC

Sloane & Co. represents Cubic Corp. as the San Diego-based defense and transportation (fare collection/revenue management) systems company adopts a poison pill defense in the wake of a potential takeover bid by hedge fund Elliott Management and Veritas Capital.

Cubic says it issued a rights plan after Elliott disclosed that it has accumulated a 15 percent ownership stake. The rights plan "is intended to provide the board with time to make informed decisions and prevent any third party from obtaining control of Cubic in a manner and at a price that are not in the best interests of Cubic's shareholders," said David Melchior, lead independent director.

Sloane & Co's Dan Zacchei and Joe Germani handle Cubic, which lost \$60.7M on \$1B revenues during the nine-month ended June period. Stagwell Group's SKDKnickerbocker is the parent company of Sloane & Co.

FLY AFRICA GETS MEDIA SUPPORT

Fly Africa, based at Mogadishu Airport, has retained Bethesda law firm Schulman Bhattacharya to handle US media inquiries surrounding the shooting down of an African



Express cargo plane carrying humanitarian supplies over Somalia in May.

The *New York Times* reported that the Kenya-registered plane loaded with supplies to fight COVID-19 may have been shot down by Ethiopian troops,

who thought it was about to carry out a suicide attack.

Fly Africa had been leasing the aircraft and had about 20 months left on the lease at the time of the crash, according to SB's engagement letter.

SB's job is to intercede with authorities in Ethiopia, African Union Mission in Somalia peacekeeping force, African Union and the United Nations to negotiate compensation for the incident on an "informal basis."

It has also registered with the Justice Dept. because it may have to field questions from the American media.

MAKING LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN

The PR industry has acknowledged women are underrepresented in leadership positions, yet little seems to have been done about it and very few studies have been done to figure out why.

Some data suggests that while women hold nearly three-quarters of PR jobs, they only represent 20 percent of senior leadership posts. Some evidence suggests that during the COVID-19 pandemic, women's careers have taken yet another hit, as oftentimes women spend more time than men overseeing the care and schooling for children.

Years ago, I myself was a young, female PR professional with two young kids at home. Before I owned my own agency, I had often been forced to choose between being successful at work or being successful at home because of the demanding, sometimes 24/7 nature of public relations. When I opened Thompson & Co. Public Relations, I realized I didn't have to live that way anymore. And neither did my staff.

Almost 90 percent of T&C's management team is made up of strong female leaders. And despite COVID-19, T&C recently promoted four women at the agency to new senior leadership roles, including two executive team roles.

So, how did T&C defeat the statistics? The agency puts an emphasis on creating a culture that encourages growth for all employees, but especially female employees in a profession where women are underrepresented in leadership positions.

For agency leadership hoping to replicate this kind of retention, here are some values I recommend starting with.

Family first: T&C employees strive for work/life integration. And family is defined individually. It's not limited to traditional definitions, so whether you are a working mom, a daughter responsible for taking care of her parents or have any other family responsibility – that comes first.

Focus on personal and professional development: Learn from others at every opportunity, engage in what makes you uncomfortable and always push toward innovation. T&C not only encourages professional development (in all forms) it's nearly a requirement.

Loyalty is everything: This one is big. Many people might say they rose to the top by focusing inward, focusing on their own career path. At T&C, we consider first what is best for our clients, then what is best for the whole T&C team before we look at what is best for ourselves. Because of this, employees celebrate each other's wins and show a dedication to mentoring those who follow in their footsteps.

Having women in leadership roles changes the workplace. It's essential for our industry to work toward getting rid of the gap that exists. Each of the four women recently promoted to senior leadership positions at T&C brings a unique and valuable skill set, and they continuously roll up their sleeves to deliver results. I can't wait to see how their leadership will shape the future of the agency.

I encourage everyone to look within their organizations at the leadership level and evaluate if women hold, or have held, those positions. If not, why? Can you change your company culture to create pathways for women in leadership?

Jennifer Thompson is President and CEO of Thompson & Co. with offices in Anchorage, AK and Houston, TX.



Jennifer Thompson

COMMENTARY



We've come down to this: the Top Banana has threatened to turn America into a Banana Republic.

President Trump knows his re-election bid is a long shot due to his disastrous handling of the COVID-19 crisis that has left more than 200K Americans dead and an economy in tatters.

Recognizing there are dark days ahead and a slew of criminal proceedings, Trump has gone into his default mode of cheating and gaming the system.

Since the presidency is his “stay out of jail card,” he’s desperate to remain in office by any means possible. Trump has been delegitimizing the upcoming vote, charging Democrats with “rigging” mail-in ballots and suppressing turnout.

The president though overplayed his hand, On Sept. 23, he refused to commit to a peaceful transfer of power. “We’re going to see what happens,” he said.

That triggered a backlash on Twitter from his Republican enablers.

“The winner of the November 3rd election will be inaugurated on January 20th. There will be an orderly transition just as there has been every four years since 1792.”—Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell.

“Fundamental to democracy is the peaceful transition of power; without that, there is Belarus. Any suggestion that a president might not respect this Constitutional guarantee is both unthinkable and unacceptable.” —Utah Sen. Mitt Romney.

“Under our system, the American people decide through their votes, and the political leaders follow the will of the people. The peaceful transfer of power is essential to this constitutional guarantee and must be protected.”—Ohio Sen. Rob Portman.

“As we have done for over two centuries, we will have a legitimate & fair election. It may take longer than usual to know the outcome, but it will be a valid one. And at noon on Jan 20, 2021, we will peacefully swear in the President.” —Florida Sen. Marco Rubio.

Republicans have backed Trump every step of the way throughout his nightmare presidency. But his bid to become America’s dictator-in-chief may have given the GOP a spine. Better late than never.

The Business Roundtable introduced its “Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation” report in 2019 as 181 CEOs vowed to “do the right thing” and manage their businesses for the benefit of all stakeholders, not just shareholders.

PR firms cheered the prospects of lining up assignments from Big Business, eager to highlight their newly found commitment to ESG and purpose-driven stakeholder capitalism.

But things don’t always turn out the way that one expects.

The real-world nightmares of COVID-19, economic collapse and George Floyd’s murder disrupted the dreams of the BRT, according to the “COVID-19 & Inequality: A Test of Corporate Purpose” report bankrolled by the Ford Foundation.

The Report found that BRT’s new code of conduct turned

out to be a wash. Companies committed to social responsibility continue to do so. Enterprises that put financial returns on top of their list also continue to do so.

The Report found that signing the BRT had a small but negative effect on a company’s response to COVID-19, while it had a small positive effect on its inequality score.

It found: “Corporate commitments to purpose are less informative about a company’s future performance on social and human capital issues than other indicators. What matters more is whether a company has a strong track record of proactively managing issues that may become material during a crisis, and whether a company is an early responder on relevant issues during a crisis.”

The researchers warned that companies that signed the BRT pledge but didn’t “walk the walk” are setting themselves up for backlash. “Short of authenticity, companies risk adopting a corporate strategy that lacks focus and generates reputational issues when unfulfilled claims are inevitably scrutinized.”

What took you so long? Mars Food announced on Sept. 23 that it was retiring Uncle Ben’s brand of rice.

The brand’s image featured an elderly Black man on the packaging and the term “Uncle,” which has been used as a pejorative to refer to a Black man.

Mars made the move after a three-month review, begging the question: Where’ve you been during the season of racial unrest and battle against inequity?

Fiona Dawson, global president, Mars Food Multisales and Global Customers, said the company listened to thousands of consumers, employees and other stakeholders from around the world before ditching Uncle Ben.

Mars could have saved a lot of time and energy by setting up a table in Times Square and asking passers-by if they thought the image of Uncle Ben was a racial stereotype.

The company says it’s removing the image of Uncle Ben to “create more equitable iconography” and is recasting the brand as “Ben’s Original.”

It is keeping the name “Ben” because Dawson says Mars “wants to keep what we can of the past.”

Go figure that one out.

Law of the COVID-19 jungle... The virus has made Americans less compassionate and happy, according to a survey by Brodeur Partners.

The Boston-based firm found a 12 percent drop in the compassionate category and a 10 percent dip in happiness from a similar relevance study that it conducted in 2012.

On the upside: COVID-19 has triggered a greater focus on financial security and career paths, especially by Millennials and Gen Zers, who are bearing the brunt of the economic impact of the virus.

Brodeur did find a silver lining on the happiness front.

It noted that the level of happiness rises with age. Thirty-one percent of Gen Z (1965 to 1980) respondents rated themselves very happy and fulfilled, a share that grew to 60% for the Silent Generation, the group born from 1928 to 1945.

—Kevin McCauley