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O'Dwyer's

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CA SEEKS BENEFIT PAYMENT OUTREACH

California is looking for a partner to develop and implement a statewide public outreach, education and media campaign about the expansion of electronic fund transfer options for people receiving disability, paid family leave and unemployment benefits.



The Golden State is especially keen on increasing awareness and equitable access among its diverse racial, ethnic and cultural communities to ensure a smooth transition to the new payment scheme.

The selected partner will use earned media, paid advertising, social media activities, influencer outreach and alliances with advocacy groups to spread the message about new payment options and the transition from vendor Bank of America to the Money Network.

California has budgeted \$3.6M for a two-year campaign that will kick off Nov. 1. Proposals are due Sept. 8. Send them by overnight or express delivery to: Employment Development Dept.; Mail Services; 800 Capitol Mall, Room 2029; Sacramento, CA 95814; Attn: Clayton Wolery.

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

KRISPY KREME APPOINTS DAUKUS VP-IR

Krispy Kreme appoints Stephanie Daukus as VP of investor relations. Daukus joins the company from Olo, a B2B



Stephanie Daukus

SaaS company that develops digital ordering and delivery programs for restaurants, where she led the investor relations function.

She has also held senior IR posts at Envestnet and Thomson Reuters.

In her new role, Daukus will oversee Krispy Kreme's investor relations practices, including the communication of its financial performance and corporate strategy to the investment community

and serving as the primary point of contact for analysts and investors.

"She has a proven track record of execution across investor relations roles in multiple industries and will continue to drive consistency and transparency in our communications with the investment community," said Krispy Kreme executive VP and CFO Jeremiah Ashukian.

THOMPSON TAKES CNN CEO POST

Warner Bros. Discovery has appointed Mark Thompson, former director-general of the BBC and CEO of the New York Times Co., chairman/CEO of CNN Worldwide, effective Oct. 9.

He will be responsible for strategy, operations and programming across CNN's broadcast, streaming and digital properties.

"Mark is a true innovator who has transformed for the digital age two of the world's most respected news organizations," said David Zaslav, WBD CEO.

Thomas held the NYTC CEO job from 2012-2020, and led the BBC from 2004-2012.

Prior to taking the top spot at BBC, Thompson worked as researcher, director, field producer and showrunner at the news division.

CNN's interim leadership team of David Leavy, COO; and EVPs Amy Entelis, (talent and content development); Virginia Moseley (editorial, CNN US); and Eric Sherling, (US programming) will continue in their functional roles.

They will report to Thompson.



Mark Thompson

BIDEN AIDE TO DISNEY MEDIA RELATIONS POST

Remi Yamamoto, former special assistant to President Biden, has come on board at Disney Entertainment Television as VP-media relations.

At the White House, Yamamoto was also senior adviser to the office of the chief of staff. She served as a spokesperson for the administration and worked on strategic communications and press strategy.

Yamamoto has a long record in Democratic politics. In addition to serving as Biden's traveling national press secretary during the 2020 campaign, she has served as communications director for Iowa governor Fred Hubbard, press secretary for Tom Perriello's unsuccessful 2017 campaign for Virginia governor, and regional press secretary for Hillary for America.



Remi Yamamoto

At Disney, Yamamoto will handle cross-brand messaging and communications strategies across Disney Entertainment TV's portfolio, as well as overseeing teams for crisis communications and issue-oriented messaging.

MOVIE STUDIOS HIRE CRISIS FIRM TLG

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers has retained [The Levinson Group](#) for PR support in its battle with striking screenwriters and actors over compensation and the use of artificial intelligence.

Molly Levinson's firm is charged with providing strategic communications regarding the union negotiations. The studios and streaming companies are struggling to overcome the perception that they are greedy and out-of-touch with the people responsible for producing Hollywood's magic.



AMPTP released a revised proposal to the WGA on Aug. 23 that recognized the "foundational role writers play in the industry."

President Carol Lombardini said AMPTP's priority is to end the strike "so that valued members of the creative community can return to what they do besting."

The WGA dismissed the revised AMPTP offer as either nothing, or not nearly enough.

Washington's Precision Strategies, which was co-founded by Joe Biden's deputy chief of staff Jen O'Malley Dillon, represents SAG-AFTRA.

TENEO ADDS GRONTZKI

Teneo has hired Philipp Grontzki, who is a 20-year veteran of corporate communications and financial journalism, as a managing director in its strategy and communications group.



Philipp Grontzki

Earlier in his career, he reported for the *Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones and Bloomberg.

He worked for more than 10 years at Germany-based multinationals including Sartorius, the biopharmaceuticals and lab equipment giant, and Siemens.

Grontzki served as spokesperson at Siemens' spin-off Osram and communicated its transformation from traditional lighting products to a more high-tech orientation.

Earlier in his career, he reported for the *Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones and Bloomberg.

HYUNDAI HIRES PAUKERT FOR PRODUCT PR

Hyundai Motor North America has hired veteran automotive journalist Chris Paukert as senior group manager-product PR, effective Sept. 5.



Chris Paukert

Stewart said Paukert's unique skillset and experience will help us create new ways to promote Hyundai's vehicles to media and consumers.

He will promote Hyundai's product line-up, new vehicle launches and electrification program.

Paukert spent nearly 20 years in the automotive press, most recently as director of video editorial at Edmunds.com.

He also was executive editor at both CNET Cars/Roadshow and autoblog.com and editor-in-chief at Winding Road Magazine.

At Hyundai, Paukert will report to Michael Stewart, PR & communications director.

Stewart said Paukert's unique skillset and experience will help us create new ways to promote Hyundai's vehicles to media and consumers.

ON THE MOVE

The Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants brings on **Molly Sullivan** as VP of government affairs. Sullivan joins the organization from [Rasky Partners](#), where she was a VP. She previously held several roles in the Massachusetts State Senate, including legislative director for state senator Cindy Friedman and legislative director for the Joint Committee on Public Safety. "Molly's substantial public policy experience will strengthen our advocacy efforts that promote an economy and business climate where our members, and their clients and industries they serve, will thrive," says MassCPA deputy CEO Zach Donah.



Molly Sullivan

The Romans New York promotes **Katherine Espinosa** to senior VP, culture + media. Espinosa came on board at the agency last year, after serving as a VP at BCW. She previously worked at DKC and M Booth. In her new role at The Romans, Espinosa, who has handled such clients Amazon, Pernod Ricard and Candy Crush for the agency, will lead earned media relations. "Katherine intrinsically understands something critically important in PR—that culture is currency," said The Romans executive VP and partner Srah Jenkins.

Whataburger, which has nearly 800 outlets across 10 states, promotes **Donna Tuttle** to VP of marketing and communications, a newly created role. Tuttle most recently served as the company's group director, brand communication & culture. Before joining Whataburger in 2017, she was senior creative director at Pace Communications. In her new role, Tuttle will oversee teams that handle marketing, advertising, consumer and marketing Insights, digital strategy and customer experience, CPG and retail brand marketing, brand communication, social media, PR and meetings and events.



Donna Tuttle

Talkdesk, a cloud contact center platform, brings on **Neville Letzerich** as CMO. Letzerich was most recently vice president and CMO at Cisco Security, handling global end-to-end marketing and growth strategy. He previously held the CMO spot at companies including Forescout Technologies, Virtu and Duo Security. At Talkdesk, Letzerich will lead the company's marketing organization and sales development initiatives.

Abivax, a French clinical-stage biotech company, appoints **Patrick Malloy** as senior VP, investor relations. Malloy comes to Abivax from VectivBio, where he was senior VP, investor relations & strategic communications. Before that, he was VP investor relations & corporate communications at Arena Pharmaceuticals. At Abivax, Malloy is expected to play a crucial role in furthering the strategic international positioning of Abivax and its obefazimod (a treatment for patients with moderate-to-severe, active ulcerative colitis) with the investor community. Malloy will be based at the Abivax office on the U.S. East Coast.

THE CULTURE WAR MISEDUCATING GEN Z

When students return to school this fall, they may feel as though they've entered "The Twilight Zone." Thousands of classrooms from middle and high schools to universities will be beset by politicization and contrived claims about the reliability of science, cleaner energy and the effects rising emissions are having on extreme weather events and the climate crisis.



Aric Caplan

It may seem surreal, but ideologues within state legislatures (e.g., in [Ohio](#), [Texas](#) and [Florida](#)) are substituting proven climate scholarship with politicians' deeply held beliefs and the influence of dark money from the fossil fuel industry with the goal of corrupting science curriculums.

If you think your state is immune from [culture warriors](#) greenwashing classes and new textbooks and obscuring facts from curriculum, think again. Extremists' claims [allege parents and teachers](#) are fed up and that "schools have been hijacked by the Left." PragerU recently went on offense, counteracting known science to promote so-called conservative "edutainment," which pitches cultural biases towards naive communities and their children. These capricious teaching programs by [PragerU Kids](#) are disguised among [Florida's](#) public schools since state government endorsed the company as an official vendor. Oddly, PragerU (aka, the Prager University Foundation) is a misnomer because it lacks accreditation and offers no academic degrees.

Mike Huckabee, the former presidential candidate and 44th Governor of Arkansas, is promoting his new children's book called the "[Kids Guide to the Truth About Climate Change](#)." It's fraught with duplicities. He contends that schools today ostensibly miss the mark by teaching science. But Huckabee, who lacks any science credentials, downplays the climate crisis, defends the fossil fuel industry and fails to produce any relevant or peer-reviewed evidence.

Teaching real science in meaningful ways can encourage kids to learn about the environment, biodiversity and how to adapt to our warming planet. The Texas State Board of Education seems committed to this view, albeit with a [dark](#) twist. The Board has vowed to institute "[objective](#)" teaching of science and climate change, such that schools now must "present positive aspects of the United States and Texas and its heritage and abundant natural resources." That doesn't inspire confidence nor impartiality. But a "positive" slant on [air pollution](#) can produce childhood asthma or premature death.

Since energy trade groups often help shape lesson plans, kids are learning that America's increased reliance on fossil fuels is okay. The Texas Energy Council's agenda changed professional development workshops for teachers and published baseless climate theories in [textbooks](#). Likeminded petrochemical supporters that push "Fossils to Fuel" classes and doubt [climate science](#) include [Arkansas Energy Rocks](#) and [Oklahoma's Energy Resources Board Home Room](#).

We can't rationalize putting corporate profits above education. Yet, oil and gas champions obfuscate today's menacing climate crisis, insisting it's a "[fad](#)."

Allies of oil, natural gas and coal allege government overreach, spinning tales of America's so-called fossil fuels tradition. A recent teachers conference threw out [CO2 Coalition](#)

members for circulating deceptive comic books, claiming greenhouse gases are eco-friendly.

Polluting industries deride the [social cost of carbon](#), which many call "the most important number you've never heard of." Big polluters routinely deny the tons of carbon they dump into the atmosphere as anti-science nonsense and ignore energy efficiency, renewables and electrification. Regrettably, their naiveté about [feedback loops](#) and catastrophic [tipping points](#) worsens the climate crisis.

Investigative reporter Katie Worth, in her book "[Miseducation: How Climate Change Is Taught in America](#)," explains how Big Oil downplays the climate crisis to school kids. She observed an industry facilitator address a seventh-grade class. "My feeling is that if this presentation were part of, you know, if the next day they were getting someone from the solar company or the Sierra Club or something it ... could have potentially been part of like a balanced education on this issue. But that's not the case."

Resultant bias from [curriculum sponsorships](#) is problematic. As for industry's place in the classroom, Worth added, "I don't think anyone is arguing that we shouldn't have any private business in schools. Like computers are donated through Apple. But kids are just getting a very unadulterated (account), just kind of messages straight from the horse's mouth with no questioning, no deepening, no kind of broader perspective."

When politicians grandstand on education, they intimidate teachers. Meanwhile, partisan state legislatures cherry-pick facts to sow doubt about climate resilience. They also confuse families and distract constituents. Elected officials scoff at doomsday scenarios about living on our [warming planet](#). Their lies are reminiscent of tobacco industry marketing tactics propagated decades ago.

It's time we call out [greenwashing](#). The truth is clean energy can electrify our homes, cars and trucks and protect our planet without destroying the climate. This generation must reject today's foremost scourge of disinformation.

Aric Caplan is President of [Caplan Communications](#), a public interest practice founded in 2004.

CHILDREN'S TRUST NEEDS DIGITAL MARKETING

[Children's Trust Massachusetts](#), which is dedicated to ending child abuse in The Bay State, plans to hire a firm to handle digital marketing, fundraising, brand strategy and messaging for two initiatives in fiscal 2024.

The first is the creation of a statewide digital push to promote awareness of the Children's Trust and increase the number of donations to it. That effort is budgeted at \$100K and the campaign will run from November through June.

The second is for development of a brand/messaging and communications strategy following the completion this fall of a new five-year strategic plan. That \$100K campaign will roll out in the April/May timeframe.

The Trust may award contracts to two shops, but prefers to work with a single firm.

The organization also has allocated \$175K for a digital push to generate awareness of [SafeKidsThrive.org](#), which helps organizations create and implement child sexual abuse prevention and intervention plans.

Proposals are due Sept. 8 at the COMMBUYS electronic portal.

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



LITTLE ROCK CVB SEEKS MULTIPLE PARTNERS

The Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau is going to hire multiple full-service shops to handle PR, marketing and advertising services in order to attract more visitors to the capital of The Natural State.



Little Rock hauled in \$1.6B in tourism dollars in 2021, which represents 21 percent of the state's total.

The LRC&VB is charged with promoting the city as a meetings, sports and leisure travel destination.

It operates the Statehouse Convention Center, Robinson Center, Cromwell Building, River Market (Ottenheimer Hall, First Security Amphitheater and pavilions) and multiple parking facilities.

The selected firms will receive two-year contracts with options to renew for another five years.

Proposals are due Sept. 11.

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

GENTRY JOINS ACRONYM AS COO

Erin Gentry, one-time US president of Hill+Knowlton Strategies, has joined digital marketing shop Acronym as COO.



Erin Gentry

During her eight-year stint at H+K, Gentry also served as EVP-global co-lead of client services.

She joins Acronym from WPP's Group SJR content marketing consultancy.

"As our COO, Erin will be instrumental in driving Acronym's operational strategies, ensuring continued excellence in client service and fostering our ongoing

growth," said Dave Rollo, CEO of Acronym.

He praised Gentry's ability for hands-on leadership that elevates client experience and cultivates high-performing agency teams.

Based in New York, Acronym has offices in Toronto, Berlin and Singapore.

FTI CONSULTING WORKS ABCAM'S DEAL

[FTI Consulting](#) handles Abcam as the British biotechnology company agrees to a \$5.7B takeover from DC-based

Danaher Corp., which chalked up \$31.5B in fiscal 2022 revenues.

Abcam will operate as a stand-alone company in Danaher's life sciences division to bolster its strategy "to help map complex diseases and accelerate the drug discovery process."

Founded in Cambridge in 1998,

Abcam's validated antibodies, reagents, biomarkers and assays are used by an estimated 750K researchers.

Danaher CEO Rainer Blair said Abcam's long track record of innovation and breadth of antibody portfolio positions makes it a key partner for the scientific community.

The transaction is expected to close mid-2024.



A LABOR DAY LESSON LEARNED

By late 2007, economists nationwide had reached the consensus that a U.S. recession was likely right around the corner, if not already at our doorstep. The PR firm that then employed me, with its revenues and profits increasingly pinched, saw no cause to doubt the forecast.

Rumors of layoffs at our agency started circulating around our office in midtown Manhattan. Our senior management committee met one morning to discuss what to do. Our office head gave us what he saw as the bottom line: layoffs at our firm appeared inevitable. But he also asked how we could prevent any.



Bob Brody

What happened next offers a hint about how business leaders might better avoid layoffs today. Call it a Labor Day lesson learned.

Everyone in the conference room looked at everyone else to see who might volunteer a strategy first. All of us in attendance had fine titles and pulled down handsome salaries and now confronted the looming possibility that our very livelihoods were at stake.

I rarely said anything at senior management meetings, and certainly never impulsively. But an idea came to mind then and there. And I decided, uncharacteristically, to express it freely.

What if we, the senior leaders present, took slight pay cuts—say, 5% or 10%—to save some jobs? What if we tried this measure purely as a stopgap, with reimbursement for our sacrifice to come later, after the fiscal passed? An easy fix, yes?

Several colleagues stared at me, alarmed, as if I had taken leave of my senses or grown a second head. No one said anything. No one even made an effort to dismiss the idea. My modest proposal had gained less traction than a flat tire.

I left the meeting feeling equally good and bad. Good because I was convinced my recommendation for temporary pay cuts to spare layoffs was pragmatic and perhaps even noble. Bad because no one agreed with me, or at least was willing to say so in public. Bad, too, because the indifference I sensed, the lack of empathy, left me cold.

Soon after, with nine years at the firm under my belt, I was laid off. Some 20 other employees were let go as well. Several had attended that senior management meeting.

About a year later, in the wake of the layoffs, word leaked about how the firm was faring. As it turned out, higher-ups had cut the salaries of senior managers across the board by 10% to 20%. Nobody else was being laid off.

That was of course the pre-emptive tactic I had once dared to propose. What my former colleagues had evidently regarded as my naivete about fiscal reform the firm had eventually adopted as corporate policy. The upshot was plain to see. If the company had imposed the austerity I had suggested, it probably would have saved some jobs, including mine.

For the record, I felt anything but heroic. But I would do the same again.

Bob Brody is a PR consultant and former senior vice president at Weber Shandwick, Ogilvy and Rubenstein. He is also an essayist who contributes to the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and the Washington Post, among other publications, and the author of the memoir "Playing Catch with Strangers: A Family Guy (Reluctantly) Comes of Age."

HAWAII SEEKS TO LURE TECH INVESTMENT

The Hawaii Technology Development Corp. wants PR and marketing support to bolster its mission to attract clean, high-wage tech jobs to the Aloha State.



The selected firm will support “efforts to generate awareness and communications messages about Hawaii’s growth tech-based economy and HTDC’s vision, role and programs,” according to the RFP.

The scope of work covers press releases; feature writing and profiles of high-level government officials, partners and stakeholders; pitching articles, op-eds, blogs; social media activity; e-mail marketing; graphic design; and crisis management.

The communications partner will have 10 years of economic development experience.

HTDC has budgeted \$95K for the one-year program that may be extended for another 12-month period.

Proposals are due Sept. 14 at procurement@htdc.org.

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

H+K PUTS CLAIRE LI IN CHARGE OF CHINA

Hill+Knowlton Strategies has appointed Claire Li, who most recently led communications for Starbucks China, CEO of its Greater China region.



Claire Li

Li, who has nearly 30 years of PR experience, handled Ford Motor’s and General Electric’s communications in China.

Earlier in her career, she was a member of H+K’s corporate communications practice in Hong Kong, and did stints in China for FleishmanHillard and APCO Worldwide.

“Claire has a proven track record developing rich, transformational communication strategies for some of the world’s most important brands,” said AnnaMaria DeSalva, H+K CEO.

H+K has offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

WPP owns H+K.

SIERRA LEONE REACHES OUT TO MERCURY

Mercury Public Affairs is negotiating a contract to represent the West African nation of Sierra Leone. The pact is expected to include PR, government relations and outreach to US officials and media outlets.



The US State Dept. has expressed concerns “irregularities” in the June 24 election in which president Julius Maade Bio was declared the winner.

It is “disturbed by the reports of intimidation, including death threats,” according to its July 24 statement.

Mercury will have six staffers representing Sierra Leone.

That includes ex-Congressman Toby Moffett, who once co-chaired Mayer Brown’s Africa practice; Bryan Lanza, who was communications director for the Trump Transition; and Eric Bloom, former senior producer for the CBS Evening News.

Omnicom owns Mercury.

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

160over90 is named communications agency of record for commercial real estate finance and advisory firm **Walker & Dunlop**. The agency will develop and

execute on public relations strategy while also developing social strategy. It will also work to amplify major corporate announcements and launches through media relations as well as spearheading executive thought leadership efforts for Walker & Dunlop CEO Willy Walker and other senior leaders.

The work with Walker & Dunlop will sit within the 160over90’s newly expanded corporate communications practice led by Senior Vice President AJ Goodman.

“We sought an agency partner who understands our mission and can help take the lead on inserting Walker & Dunlop into the right narratives and cultural conversations to drive awareness,” said Walker & Dunlop CMO Carol McNerney.

Jenerate PR expands its scope with Galpão Gaúcho Brazilian Steakhouse to become national agency of record for the restaurant chain, working with all its locations in the US. following a successful performance in 2023. Galpão Gaucho has six locations including Napa, Walnut Creek, Cupertino and Roseville in California; the Las Vegas Strip; , and Charleston, SC. A new location in San Diego is scheduled to open later this year.

5WPR signs on as agency of record for **Jackpot.com**, a platform that allows lottery players to securely order official state lottery tickets from their mobile phone, tablet, or desktop. The platform recently launched in New York State. 5W will leverage its history of working with online gambling clients to develop a focused and strategic approach to supporting Jackpot.com’s expansion, keeping regulatory updates top of mind. The agency’s services to online gambling and lottery clients include messaging and positioning, media relations, visibility programs, content creation, partnerships and celebrity relations, digital media campaigns, event planning, thought leadership, and speaking opportunities.

Champion picks up **Roll-Em-Up Taquitos**, which serves hand-rolled and pan-fried taquitos. The agency has been engaged to generate local and national buzz, secure high-profile influencers and implement creative strategies to introduce Roll-Em-Up’s food to more consumers. Champion will employ proactive outreach via both traditional and digital media, as well as creating partnerships with influencers and celebrities, and establishing its executives as thought leaders. “Champion shares our passion for excellence,” said Roll-Em-Up co-founder and CEO Ryan Usrey.



Kleber & Associates, which works with clients in the building products industry, signs on as agency of record for **Tulip Cooking**, a manufacturer and distributor of modular gas and induction cooktops. K&A will manage public relations, content strategy, influencer engagement, social media, and new product introductions, along with events for the client. Tulip’s products are hand-assembled in the Netherlands, reflecting the brand’s commitment to old world craft and new world efficiency. “K&A is an ideal partner who’ll work seamlessly with our team to elevate the Tulip Cooking brand name,” said Louis Van Leeuwen, CEO of Tulip Cooking.



COMMENTARY



Joe Biden

If Joe Biden fails to get PR mileage from his Inflation Reduction Act's provision to allow Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices for seniors, he doesn't deserve to be nominated for a second term.

Actions by drug companies and their lobbyists have barred the government from bargaining over prescription prices.

The result: record profits for Big Pharma and the highest drug prices

in the world for the US.

If Biden's plan to cut the prices of 10 popular drugs in half survives Big Pharma's court challenge, US taxpayers will save \$160B in Medicare costs, according to the Congressional Budget Office. That is not chump change.

Biden should take a cue from AARP's chief advocacy and engagement officer Nancy LeaMond who praised his drug plan. "For too long, big drug companies have fleeced our country and padded their profits by setting outrageous prices, all at the expense of American lives," she said.

The president said lowering the cost of prescriptions is part of "Bidenomics." He has to make that case to the 65M Americans on Medicare.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America trade group has vowed to fight Biden every step of the way.

"Giving a single government agency the power to arbitrarily set the price of medicines with little accountability, oversight or input from patients and their doctors will have significant negative consequences," it said.

That's pretty rich coming from an organization representing members who arbitrarily set the price of their products with zero accountability, oversight or input from their customers for years.

PhRMA said Americans deserve better. It is right. We deserve better than serving as Big Pharma's cash machine.

Go get 'em, Joe.

Looie delivers. Let's hear it for Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, whom *The Economist* profiled as an "effective and ambitious leader."

DeJoy, who was a major Donald Trump donor, got off to a rocky start. Conspiracy theorists had predicted that he was put in office to tamper with postal voting in order to throw the 2020 election to Trump. It didn't happen.

Though DeJoy's "style can be brash and combative," he passed many measures that are supported by the left such as better healthcare benefits for workers and guaranteed six-day delivery service, the magazine noted.

The USPS stood tall during the pandemic by delivering more than 750M Covid-19 test kits. DeJoy also sliced mail delivery time by a day from Jan. 2021 to April 2023.

The USPS is beset by the crash in first-class mail volume from 104B pieces in 2001 to 53B in 2020 and the rise in e-commerce.

DeJoy has unveiled a "Delivering for America" plan that aims to put USPS on a stabler financial footing.

He's also kept the public's trust in the USPS, as its favorability rating of 77 percent tops every federal agency except the National Park Service.

Watch out, NPS.

Paying the Piper. 3M, which tarnished its corporate citizenship reputation by trying to use bankruptcy to limit its product liabilities, has agreed to pay \$6B to resolve claims that use of its earplugs designed for combat triggered hearing loss.

The company filed voluntary bankruptcy proceedings last July for its Aearo Technologies unit and committed a \$1B fund to pay soldiers who blamed hearing loss on Aearo earplugs.

3M claimed that filing for Chapter 11 was the right thing to do for all involved. It pitched the process as a way to achieve an efficient and equitable resolution, reduce uncertainty, and increase clarity for all stakeholders, while reducing the cost and time that could otherwise be required to litigate thousands of cases.

Without bankruptcy, 3M said it "could take years, if not decades, to litigate on a case-by-case basis."

But a federal judge in June rejected the Aearo Chapter 11 scheme and 3M announced on Aug. 29 that it had reached a mediated agreement to pay \$5B in cash and \$1B in stock through 2029 to settle the earplug claims.

The agreement is not an admission of liability and 3M maintains the earplugs are safe and effective when used properly.

It is telling that 3M's press release announcing the settlement, which is six times more than the company's proposed in its Aearo Chapter 11 scheme, does not include a statement from Roman.

He should take a bow.

Stay away from the 'Silk Road.' Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and China's culture & tourism minister Hu Heping have announced plans to hold a conference in China next year to help revive travel between the two countries.

That comes as Muslim civil rights groups and Uyghur advocacy organizations call for travel companies to stop selling trips to China's Xinjiang region, where China's central government is waging a campaign of genocide against minority groups.

A report by the [Uyghur Human Rights Project](#) released Aug. 30 said western tourism to the region risked supporting the normalization of Chinese government policies that were intended to destroy the Uyghur identity.

The trips are marketed as "Silk Road" tours and feature stops in the cities of Turpan, Kashgar and Urumqi.

"Travel companies have no business in running tours to sites of ongoing atrocities," said UHRP executive director, Omer Kanat.

Raimondo set a good example for future American tourists to China. She visited Shanghai Disneyland during her August swing through China.

—Kevin McCauley