Opinion



by Michael Sean Winters

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February 8, 2018

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The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty filed an interesting amicus curiae brief on behalf of Christian and LGBT printers in a forthcoming Kentucky Supreme Court case, *Baker* v. *Hands On Originals*. They contend that just as a Christian printer should not be made to make T-shirts that carry a message of which she does not approve, an LGBT printer should not be forced to make T-shirts with a message of which she does not approve. I fear very much that such lawsuits make America a less reasonable and sociable place, but there is nothing as American as filing a lawsuit. At least this brief raises the issue above the sophomoric identity politics that usually have the left placing the words religious liberty in scare quotes.

At the New York Times, a look at how and why we are headed towards a second government shutdown in as many months. This is one phenomenon we cannot lay entirely at the door of Mr. Trump. Government shutdowns, real or threatened, have been with us for more than two decades now. They are the measure of our polarization and dysfunction. The danger for Trump is that he campaigned as the business guy who could fix Washington, so he should be more careful about toying with this: It makes him look like a pol. As for Congress, they should be spanked publicly — all of them. In all the great moments during which the Constitution faced

a challenge — nullification, the Hartford Convention, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the 1937 court-packing scheme, and Watergate — Congress managed to pass a budget.

At RNS, Mark Silk displays his capacity for finding an exact and edgy historical analogy as he celebrates the withdrawal of the nomination of climate change-denier Kathleen Hartnett White to be head of the President's Council of Environmental Quality. Withering.

From the Tampa Bay News, a profile of Fr. Felipe Gonzalez, a priest of the St. Petersburg Diocese who happens to be a "dreamer" (recipient of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). If Democrats were smart, which is increasingly a big if, they would make Fr. Gonzalez the face of the immigration debate and watch the pro-religion party tie itself in knots! (h/t to Rocco)

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At the Washington Post, there is a powerful look at the effects of Hurricanes Irma and Maria on the U.S. Virgin Islands. How is it possible that six months after these storms, the federal government has not done more to rebuild the infrastructure of these islands?

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

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