Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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At Millennial, Robert Christian interviews Stephen Schneck. Schneck is one of the most thoughtful Catholic scholars in the country, and his views on politics are always worth reading and thinking about. The Democrats would be in better shape if they listened to him more.

The Democratic Party's left is intent on taking down former Vice President Joe Biden. I have my problems with Biden and do not think he is on the correct side of the most important division within the party, that between the neo-liberals that have dominated economic policy and the liberal populists who want to re-write the economic rules in more fundamental ways. But Biden is a good guy, and there is no reason to diminish his achievements, nor misrepresent his record. If he is to be beat, it should be on the basis of his ideas for the future, and nothing else.

Relatedly, Sen. Elizabeth Warren made a campaign swing through West Virginia, of all places. The crowd that turned out had many who were wearing their MAGA hats. But according to Politico, she earned some nods and applause from the crowd. This is the issue for the Democrats: They say they want to beat Trump, but can a neo-liberal do it, or will Warren's economic populism bring back the white working class

voters who threw the election to Trump in 2016?

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On the other hand, Jonathan Chait at New York magazine, argues that Biden's swift rise to a dominant position in the polls shows that the Democratic Party is not as far to the left as many thought, that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez generates more buzz than votes. I am not so sure. I think the key to Biden's poll numbers is that he is widely acceptable to almost all Democrats, but he will still need to earn the nomination.

Sen. Cory Booker accused Warren of putting forward a proposal that seems like "a Donald Trump thing to say." Not only is Booker off Warren's Christmas card list, but I do not think she will choose him to be her running mate. But given his heavy reliance upon funding from the pharmaceutical industry, this was never going to be Booker's year: Health care is a winning issue for Democrats, and the essence of that issue is recognizing the ways that the pharmaceutical industry exploits the rest of us.

Andrew Sullivan, writing at New York Magazine, looks at the enormously challenging issue posed by transgender and intersexual athletes. I can think of no federal government policy in my life time that has achieved more widespread success and universal acclaim than Title IX, which required schools to fund women's athletics as they do men's. Transgender or intersex athletes may self-identify as women, but if they have significantly higher testosterone levels, is the competition fair? Julia Beck, a lesbian Baltimore city councilperson, was removed from an LGBT commission because she voiced concerns about transgender access to all-female environments. A devoted feminist, Beck cannot be dismissed as a bigot, nor can Sullivan. It is time for serious people to confront the many complicated issues raised by the emergence of transgender issues. There is a moral obligation to be inclusive, also to be intelligent. Let the debates begin.

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

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