Opinion



Mendenhall Glacier in Tongass National Forest near Juneau, Alaska, pictured in June 2008 (Wikimedia Commons/Richard Martin)



by Michael Sean Winters

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In Foreign Policy, Jonathan Gorvett looks at the potential for the Good Friday Agreement to unravel under the pressure from Brexit. The situation has also exacerbated unrelated political tensions in Northern Ireland. The agreement was one of the really great diplomatic achievements of the 1990s. The disruptors and nationalists behind Brexit will have to answer to history and the Almighty if the accords come apart.

With Hurricane Dorian barreling into Puerto Rico, what better time for us to learn that the White House is diverting funds slated to cope with disaster relief towards its construction efforts for a border wall. Set aside the irony that natural disasters are worse these days because of climate change, which the president thinks is a hoax. The Washington Post has the story.

Also at The Post, and relatedly, if the Amazon can burn, why not start logging in our own rainforest? President Donald Trump is rolling back a 20-year ban on new logging in parts of the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. The recklessness is just unspeakable.

At FiveThirtyEight, Seth Masket continues his survey of local Democratic Party activists and finds that many remain uncommitted and the rest support a variety of different candidates. Masket notes that these activists can sometimes have an out-sized influence on the direction of a campaign, and that is undoubtedly.

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At The Hill, Joe Ferullo, an NCR board member, examines Mayor Pete Buttigieg's fundraising prowess among big donors in both southern California's media rich and northern California's tech rich. All candidates want more money in the bank, but I think there is a two-edged sword here for Buttigieg. He presents himself as the thoughtful candidate, convinced that all the particular problems first require structural reforms in our democracy. If elected, he wants to eliminate the Electoral College and reform the judiciary. He wants to rollback Citizens United. But, at some point an interviewer, or debate opponent, is going to ask him: If you are so intent on reforming what is wrong with our political system, why not start right now and

forswear the high-dollar fundraisers that only serve to keep political power in the hands of rich folk?

In The New York Times, Thomas Edsall looks at new research explaining changes in the electorate that show Trump's Republican Party relied less on attracting working-class white voters with no college than most assume. It is actually the relatively affluent whites with no college who have flocked to Trump. He also looks at the voting behavior of white evangelicals, for whom partisan identity is now a part of the creed, and the difficulties in assessing how racial attitudes affect voting. It's a really fine essay that shows why facile explanations of voting behavior are so wrong.

The ultimate 21st-century liberal conundrum? Should lesbians support Buttigieg? Politico has the story. The reason to vote for someone is because you think they will do well in the job they seek and implement policies of which you approve, not because they belong to a particular tribe. This is the curse of modern liberalism: Instead of liberalism's principled, if complicated, commitment to both individualism and universalism, it is now the tribal category of the identity that afflicts us.

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

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