Opinion

News



U.S. President Barack Obama delivers his farewell address Jan. 10 at McCormick Place in Chicago. (CNS photo/Reuters/John Gress)



by Michael Sean Winters

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The political effects of Sen. Elizabeth Warren's detailed Medicare for All plan were a hot topic this weekend. At Politico, Marc Caputo and Alex Thompson do a good job rounding up the various opinions. Two things jump out, one scary and one silly. The scary thing: When Democrats talk about the need for moderation, they still think exclusively in terms of economic policy. No one in the party is moving to the center on neuralgic issues like late-term abortion or achieving a balance between LGBT rights and religious liberty claims. The silly thing: What matters most in the debate about health care is the ability to make the case in real-life, pragmatic ways. I wish Warren had introduced a phase-in period during which we could stop and take stock of the implementation process. She yet might do so. But, I don't like hearing Democrats use Republican talking points about raising taxes to challenge her when the best they offer is the current profit-driven model that they know costs more than Medicare and leaves millions of American uninsured, and millions more underinsured.

In the New York Times, these articles about Wall Street titans and bankers fearing the rise of Warren are the best advertisement for her campaign. Of course, these rich folk do not want to "change their way of life." Her plans will not be good for Porsche dealerships to be sure, but for the rest of us?

Also at Politico, in Iowa, Mayor Pete Buttigieg has been spending a lot of time on the campaign trail and it is paying off: He has jumped into the top tier with former Vice President Joe Biden, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Warren. This is especially problematic for Biden: Both men are running as the moderates in the race, but doubts about Biden's age naturally turn people's attention toward the youngest candidate in the race.

In the Washington Post, blessing upon former President Barack Obama for calling out those who call out others for a living, that is the "woke" activists who criticize people who do not pay homage to the latest political fad and rummage with an

anachronistic sledgehammer. "This idea of purity and you're never compromised and you're always politically woke and all that stuff, you should get over that quickly," said the former president. "The world is messy. There are ambiguities. People who do really good stuff have flaws."

The U.S. bishops' conference announced a new effort to promote civility. Can't say I am opposed, but is a lack of civility the problem? If we speak nicely, do the bishops really think that will solve a neuralgic issue like immigration? Our president is a vulgar man but is that the core problem with him?

At NME, a look back at the special friendship between two musical greats: Monserrat Caballe and Freddie Mercury. Their musical collaboration was one of the few successful crossover hits, although Caballe was at her best singing Verdi and Freddie was at his best with Queen. But, the awe in which they held each other and the love she showed him as he battled and succumbed to AIDS is a very beautiful thing to recall.

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

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