Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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At Politico, an in-depth look at the Trump re-election campaign's efforts* to reward and mobilize conservative Catholics. They quote a senior campaign staffer saying, "We plan to work a lot with the Knights [of Columbus] and all sorts of groups around town and around the country in a real push to find voters who are Catholic and are engaged and want to get involved in our field program." Last time I checked, the Knights are a 501(c)(8)** organization and is barred from partisan politicking. What is more, while many criticized Sens. Kamala Harris' and Mazie Hirono's questioning of a judicial nominee because he was a member of the Knights, if they are going to go all-in on re-electing President Donald Trump, then such questions seem more legitimate than not. Baltimore Archbishop William Lori, call your office!

At Religion News Service, Mark Silk offers a balanced analysis of the pros and cons of the proposed Fairness For All Act, which seeks to balance the competing claims of LGBT rights activists and religious liberty activists. In the end, Silk sides with those who think the act needs to go further in preventing non-discrimination against the LGBT community. I come down on the other side. But shame on the activist organizations on both sides that denounce such efforts at this while offering no

alternative. The culture wars will not go away so long as both sides are determined to win them, not make peace. And the dirty secret is that these groups make their living off the culture wars.

In The Washington Post, Ruth Marcus looks at the controversy surrounding whether or not Sen. Bernie Sanders told Sen. Elizabeth Warren that he did not think a woman could win the presidency in 2020, as she claims. He insists that he only said Trump would use that, among other things, to defeat the Democratic nominee. Marcus explains the difference:

> What is the difference between acknowledging the reality of sexism in politics by calling it out — and acknowledging the reality of sexism in politics by making a clear-eyed assessment of what it will take to prevent Trump from winning a second term? The answer, I think, is that the first, identifying sexism, is pushing back against the unacceptable. The second is, or would be, giving in to it. Supposedly sophisticated voters murmured that an African American couldn't be the nominee, an African American couldn't be elected president — until he was. Same with a woman. Gender is a purported negative, until it isn't.

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In The New York Times, Jamelle Bouie notes that Trump likes farmers more than he does other welfare recipients and wonders why that would be. I don't think we need to look far for an answer. I wish he focused not only on the racism at work, but also the fact that most farm subsidies go to big agribusiness corporations and not to family farms.

At Vox, Li Zhou frets about the lack of diversity in last night's debate. Of course, there was plenty of ideological diversity, and two of the six candidates were women, but in certain segments of the left, the diversity that matters has to do with race. I have an idea: If we want a more racially diverse debate stage, how about we recruit better minority candidates than the ones we got this year?

At Catholic University of America, the Busch School of Business — this time in conjunction with The Institute for Human Ecology — continues to embarrass itself,

hosting an event with a former intern*** from the Cato Institute that is headlined "Venezuela … My Story, Your Future?" Let me make this easy for you: Comparing the socio-political situation in Venezuela to virtually any aspect of the socio-political situation in the United States is laughable, unless you are an economic libertarian who sees democratic socialism of all types as the bogeyman of our time.

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

Editor's note: *Don't miss out on Michael Sean Winters' latest. Sign up and we'll let you know when he publishes new Distinctly Catholic columns.*

**The Politico story linked contains the claim that the Knights of Columbus were going to help the Trump campaign. The Knights responded immediately to that claim saying the organization does not engage in political activity.*

***The Knights of Columbus is a 501(c)(8), not a 501(c)(3).*

****The host for the event is Andrés Guilarte, a former intern of the Cato Institute.These presentations are coordinated by The Fund for American Studies, not the Cato Institute.*