Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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Finally, a bit of good news: According to the St. Louis/Southern Illinois Labor Tribune, in Missouri, unions attracted 46,000 new members last year. Union membership rose from 9.4% of the workforce in 2018 to 11.1% last year, a 15-year high. The rest of the country should find out what organizers are doing in Missouri. They worked hard to defeat a right-to-work proposal and to support an increase in the minimum wage, which put them in the spotlight. The key thing is that union members spoke to people in their social circles about the benefits of union membership. Surprise, surprise: In the age of Twitter and demographic certainties, word-of-mouth is still the most effective means of communication!

Relatedly, at the Working-Class Perspectives blog, Georgetown University's Sherry Linkon urges commentators — and Democratic strategists — to avoid the facile distinction between cultural values and working-class consciousness she recognized in a recent David Brooks column. The two are intertwined. I also hope more Democrats will note that rising wages for low-income workers have less to do with the president's economic policies and more to do with legislatively mandated increases to the minimum wage.

At Politico, Trent Spiner looks ahead to next week's New Hampshire primary. Sen. Bernie Sanders has a formidable operation there, as I witnessed in October. Not sure how much of a bounce Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Sen. Amy Klobuchar will eventually get from their better than expected showings in Iowa. And, it remains to be seen if former Mayor Pete Buttigieg can replicate his strong Iowa showing, where his concentration on rural parts of that state paid off. Not sure if New Hampshire is a "jump ball" or if, after Iowa, it is more like a close curling match, but it is gonna be fun to watch.

At the Daily Beast, Justin Baragona on the Ragin' Cajun, James Carville, telling it like it is after Iowa: Democrats, start talking about things that matter to people and doing away with borders is just crazy talk. I have a list of items I would stop talking about and so do you. How about one of the candidates tell us about their plan for those kids who are *not* going to college? I mean, it is only half the country! But, when you need to make sure your secretary of education is vetted by a transgender student, who has time for half the country?

Relatedly, at Politico, Tim Alberta reports that Democrats have no plans to contest Iowa in the general election: The time spent on campaigning for the caucuses is all the citizens of the Hawkeye state will get from the party of Jefferson. So much for the 50-state strategy which helped Democrats to take back the House and the Senate and the White House in the mid-2000s. Iowa also flipped two of the state's four congressional districts in 2018. Instead, they hope they can flip a state like Texas. No campaign should be expected to treat all states like battleground states, but Democrats did best when they had a presence in all 50 states and heard from Democrats in "flyover country" about the ways the coastal elites were killing their chances to win locally.

From the BBC, a look at the number of students in the U.S. who are homeless, more than 1.5 million. The article notes that some of the students live with relatives but many live in cars or abandoned buildings. Is this what President Donald Trump means by America winning?

From The Catholic Spirit in Minnesota, a report on Archbishop Bernard Hebda has received authorization from Rome to conduct a deeper investigation of Crookston Bishop Michael Hoeppner under the terms of *Vos estis lux mundi*. The report notes that Hebda has turned the investigation over to former judge Tim O'Malley who leads the archdiocesan Office of Ministerial Standards and Safe Environment. Of

course, Hebda turned it over to a competent layperson. Last time I checked, none of the bishops are former employees of the FBI or the local district attorney's office. This is why the hyperventilating about "bishops investigating bishops" is more than a little ridiculous. Does anyone think a judge, a person who has achieved a certain stature in his or her life, is going to risk their public reputation covering up for a bishop who is not even their bishop?

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

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