Opinion
News



by Michael Sean Winters

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Pity the Oscars did not have a category for best political ad. If they did, it would have gone to this one from former Vice President Joe Biden comparing his record with that of former Mayor Pete Buttigieg. Brutal and hilarious. Relatedly, at Politico, there is a preview of today's New Hampshire primary.

Best analysis of the impeachment trial? Hands down, George Conway in The Washington Post. Do you believe?

Sad news: The great Mirella Freni has gone to her reward. If anyone sang "Susanna" in "The Marriage of Figaro" better than she, I am not aware of it. How the angels will rejoice to have her exquisite voice joining their chorus.

Perhaps when John Garvey, the president of the Catholic University of America, hosted Charles Koch, who with his late brother David has done more to undermine unions in this country than anyone else, Garvey somehow forgot that the Catholic Church has long defended the right of workers to organize. He has forgotten it again. How else to explain his recent article in America? Garvey rightly applauds a D.C. Court of Appeals decision that held that the National Labor Relations Board has no

business interfering in religious schools. But he utterly fails to note that Catholic teaching itself requires allowing workers to unionize. More on this anon.

In The Washington Post, B. Alex Beasley explains why Buttigieg is wrong about not paying the college tuition for the children of the rich. Hey, Pete, the rich pay into Social Security and they get Social Security benefits too, and you know what? Because it is for everyone, budget cutters can't touch it. If the former mayor does not understand such basic history, he should run for a less exalted office. My fear is that he understands perfectly and is simply being cynical.

At Politico, David Freedlander profiles political scientist Rachel Bitecofer, who argues, among other things, that most political analysts have it wrong and she has it right, that too much time is spent on swing voters and not enough on making sure your side turns out. Put differently, it is not who the candidate is, but who the voters are. Bitecofer — and Freedlander — exaggerate the novelty of the view and overstate the case for effect, but it is undoubtedly good to be reminded that more people are motivated to turn out when they are angry than when they are satisfied and that increasingly few people change their political views.

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At The Dispatch, David French explains why people, who attack religious liberty because it sometimes permits actions of which they disapprove, misunderstand religious liberty. In the case at hand, an Arizona judge ruled against the Trump administration's effort to prosecute four Unitarians who put water and food in the dessert for immigrants crossing into the country without papers. They claimed they were assisting the least of their brethren and the court said the government had no compelling interest sufficient to violate their free exercise rights. Amen.

In The New York Times, Michelle Cottle extends a big "thank you" to Iowa for demonstrating beyond doubt that the Hawkeye State does not deserve its prominent place at the start of the presidential nominating process. Both parties need to re-examine how the primary calendar is organized and think of ways to make it more fair and more representative. That said, if you started the process with a bunch of primaries on the same day, the candidates with the most money would be at a huge advantage. In Iowa and New Hampshire, at least, candidates have to meet real voters, shake their hands, look into their eyes. That is not a bad thing.

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

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