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A worker carries a ballot box as he prepares the polling station in Le Touquet-Paris-Plage, France, April 6, for the April 10 presidential election. (CNS/Reuters/Pascal Rossignol)



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April 12, 2022

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Sen. Mitch McConnell seemed bewildered when journalist Jonathan Swan asked him what his moral red lines were. His true Machiavellian sensibility shone through as he muddled his way toward something that resembled an answer. Two takes, both published at The Bulwark, reflect on this enlightening moment: first, former Jeb Bush communications director Tim Miller, and then Charlie Sykes, a former conservative talk show host. Keep reading Sykes as he helps Democrats understand why they need to move to the center, especially on cultural issues, if they want to have any shot at retaining control of Congress.

In Politico, Natalie Allison reports on the Trump-backed candidacy of Rep. Ted Budd, who is seeking the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate in North Carolina. Budd had been lagging behind former Gov. Pat McCrory, but has seen a surge in his support recently. Allison reports that some of that surge is due to the financial backing of the Club for Growth, a political action committee once dedicated to enforcing the tax-cuts-at-all-costs ideology among Republicans that has now gone all-in with Donald Trump.

Despite a round of feverish articles predicting right-wing candidate Marine Le Pen might win the first round in France's presidential elections, she lagged behind incumbent President Emmanuel Macron by five points. What was more interesting to me is that almost none of the pre-election commentary focused on the fact that Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the candidate of the far left, was in the running. He trailed Le Pen by a single percentage point. The runoff will be April 24.

In The Washington Post, Christine Emba takes down the latest right-wing attack in the culture wars, in which anyone who is comfortable even discussing nontraditional sexual norms with children is accused of "grooming" them. Emba rightly points out the ways conservatives fail to do things that would actually protect children, so this is all just about stoking the culture wars in an especially vile manner.

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The effort to impound superyachts owned by sanctioned oligarchs is fascinating. Neha Tandon Sharma reports on the Amadea, a $250 million, 347-foot yacht owned by Suleiman Kerimov. It is evidently speeding toward Australia, hoping to dock in Fiji, and perhaps make a break for Vladivostok, the Russian port on the Pacific Ocean. She describes the many excesses the ship contains. I propose that such extravagant vessels be impounded even if there were no war: This kind of gross excess is immoral, full stop.

At Scientific American, Hart Rapaport and Ivana Nikolić Hughes look at the need to clean up the environmental devastation left from years of nuclear testing on the Marshall Islands. Some of the science may be a bit confusing, at least to me, but the morals are perfectly clear: Cancer rates are double the norm for those who live on these islands, and more needs to be done to clean up the contamination left by nuclear testing.

In The Philadelphia Inquirer, music critic Peter Dobrin pans that city's orchestra for its performance of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, specifically, the orchestra's attempt to "enhance" the music with a visual representation of the work using artificial intelligence. Dobrin calls the failed experiment "silly and irritating." He also makes an important point, however: "Art not only deserves a chance to fail — it needs to fail, at least once in a while. The research and development wing of most of the artistic establishment is undernourished. Epic fails are the cost of doing business if art is to thrive and move forward. Try, fail, and learn." Amen to that.