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THE BIDEN ECONOMY
Welcome Back, Carter

Joel Kotkin v. James Howard Kunstler on the Housing Crunch
Grover Norquist on Democrats’ Last-Ditch Spending Spree
China’s Empty Promise
Optimistic Booze News
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MOTTO
Politics is too important to be taken seriously.

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Summer 2021

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Joe Biden: A Meditation
by Wlady Pleszczynski

M
aybe in selecting Joe Biden as his running mate, Barack Obama was just setting us up. Think back to the glory of 2008. Did Obama ever once display serious respect for the clownish, graying, and malapropish senator from the great state of Scranton? (I remember when he once referred to us as the “American Specter.”) Given all the anti-Western signals the supremely cocky Obama liked to send out, it was as if his choice of Joe was intended to speed the demise of Average Joe America, sort of the way TV commercials were already doing in their depictions of hapless white male shlubs. Joe was Obama’s useful idiot.

In his eight years as veep, Joe gave us no reason to think otherwise, except maybe during his vice-presidential debate in 2012 with Paul Ryan, who had his breakfast, lunch, and dinner handed to him. The doofus sure had a mean streak.

Conservatives failed to pay attention. They just assumed Ryan was fighting with one if not both hands real behind his back by the strange man on whose ticket he was serving. Or maybe eight years later they just plants forgot that Joe is above all a political bully who pretends he likes to smile and play the tough guy when boasting of his anti-Trump credentials.

Next thing you know conservatives were misunderstanding him (sorry, Della), reassuring themselves throughout the lockdown campaign of 2020 that they were up against a senile, demented wreck of a man. So that essentially has been their policy, waiting for the oldest president in our history to keel over.

But neither life nor politics is that simple. Joe, never the brightest bulb in the room, doesn’t need all that many IQ points to function. As long as his eyes can read from a teleprompter, he can cover the basics, even deliver the equivalent of a State of the Union speech. It is amazing what a feral nature can accomplish, particularly in a media climate that always gives of the Union speech. It is amazing what a feral nature can accomplish, particularly in a media climate that always gives the cleverest, most fanatical politician the airwaves and print space. It is amazing what a feral nature can accomplish, particularly in a media climate that always gives Democratic Party politicians the airwaves and print space.

How did we become a land of Leninists, led by this excuse for a president? My mind goes back to the moment when Biden, two years after the Obama presidency, openly bragged to a Council of Foreign Relations audience about the delight he took in forcing the Ukrainian government to fire a prosecutor looking into the operations of a big-time Ukrainian energy company — the same company, we later learned, that had signed Biden’s son to an utterly corrupt deal.

This entire episode, and there are many like it, has in no way been disqualifying. To the contrary. That’s when you know corruption has taken the upper hand politically, intellectually, culturally, institutionally. I do not know how we get out of it, only that Joe Biden is a hero of his times.

Wouldn’t you know it — after all these years he is the one we’ve been waiting for.
PUBLISHER’S NOTE

Sandcastles
Democrats are gleefully destroying a nation that took generations to build.

by Melissa Mackenzie

It's summer! Time to go to the beach, get a tan, and build a sandcastle. Building a sandcastle is no easy feat. There needs to be a steady supply of wet sand, which means there needs to be water. Our family digs a "lake" so that we still have water when the surfs roll out. And then there's the planning and building. Building a sandcastle is not easy. A good one takes all day to complete.

But destroying a sandcastle? That's easy. All it takes is an incoming tide or a vindictive toddler, and all that hard work is gone in an instant.

The United States and nearly every leftist state is governed by vindictive toddlers who enable other vindictive toddlers to destroy everything small business owners and taxpayers have built. They’ve destroyed the economy, the incentive to work, and whole neighborhoods. National Democrats are attempting to destroy Middle East peace (and succeeding!), the military, and American hegemony. They’re destroying the dollar and creating inflation — a tax on the poor.

It takes time to build civilization. It’s something that happens brick by brick, family by family, business by business. It happens one sacrifice and risk at a time. It takes law and order, peace, resources, a coherent culture, and trust in institutions. Civilization, especially Western civilization, is an intricate and complex thing that has taken centuries to build.

What took generations to build is taking only years, sometimes mere days, to destroy. It’s astonishing how quickly and effectively the Democrats are tearing down our country.

In this slim issue, we’re focusing on the economic ramifications of their kicking at our sandcastle. Democrats have turned the cities they run into crime-ridden dens of iniquity. Citizens in states run by Democrats face higher unemployment, higher taxes, and higher COVID-19 death rates. People are moving in droves to escape this misery. Democrats encouraged the destruction of the raving Marxists of Black Lives Matter and Antifa, and now they’ve gusted their cities. Thanks to Biden’s state bailout, Democrat states are flush with cash but losing tax-paying citizens.

What are the consequences of sending checks directly to Americans? What are the consequences of inflation? What are the consequences of flooding America with cheap, imported labor? What are the consequences of bringing the U.S. economy to a screeching halt and then attempting to start it up again?

People can't buy homes. Businesses can't get needed parts. Employers can’t find employees. There is a confluence of economic psychoses, and now President Biden and the utterly irresponsible Democrats want to flood the U.S. economy with $6 trillion of funny money after already inundating it with increasingly worthless dollars. What does the future hold for Americans if the government stays on this profligate track?

In these pages, we have economists and tax policy experts and housing pros discussing the ramifications of Democrat policy. There are opposing opinions — in line with the old joke that if you put ten economists in a room, you’ll get eleven opinions.

Forecasting what will happen during such transformative times is challenging. Still, it’s worth exploring what’s happening and what the conservative response to these challenges should be.

Economic reality can drive cultural reality. We’re seeing this with the direct payments to Americans. Why work when one makes more money when one doesn’t work? And it’s not like all this idle time is being spent productively. Crime is soaring. That’s partly due to Democrat leaders being lax about penalizing criminals. It’s also because crime pays. Why buy something when one can steal it?

Economic reality can change foreign-policy reality. We’re seeing this play out, too. An economically weak America, reliant (again!) on foreign oil, strengthens enemies like Russia, Iran, and China. China’s long-term investment in the Biden family seems to be paying off. The State Department calls off investigations, and American manufacturing and medicine is crippled without tech and chemicals from China. The Biden administration talks a good game, but its policies harm the interests of Americans and free people around the world.

Should Americans worry about an ascending China? China may be America’s biggest competitor, but the country has challenges of its own, both culturally and economically. That might not matter, though, if America is weak enough.

The post-COVID, Democrat-run world isn’t all bad, though: many booze regulations loosened during the pandemic are being made permanent.

We’re also trying something new in this issue. A young game designer has created a Sudoku for us to try to solve. Please let me know what you think of it.

America is a resilient nation. She weathered natural disasters. She is charitable. She innovates and creates. It remains an open question whether or not she can endure the man-made Democrat shutdown disaster and the misguided attempts at recovery.

Melissa Mackenzie is publisher of The American Spectator.
Reagan, Carter, and Cash

From the November 1980 issue of The American Spectator.

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

In the fall of 1980, Ronald Reagan demonstrated what will save us from Jimmy Carter's deathly economics. We need to be ready to act similarly for we can escape the atrocity of reckless Bidenomics.

On September 9, in Chicago — "the city that works," as local boomers still proudly affirm — Ronald Reagan unveiled his economic program, a program for citizens who work or at least who want to work. One must keep in mind that working is not so feasible today as it was in days of yore. Seven and six-tenths of the Republic's workers, becalmed in this Age of the Common Carter, cannot get jobs.

Under our president's roof there are counselors who advise that this is to be expected, for the Eighties is to be a decade of limits, to which we shall simply have to habituate ourselves. Reagan is out of sympathy with this Malthusian perspective. He calls his program a "strategy for growth." One does not want to make too weighy a point of this disagreement, but Reagan's program does seem to place him more in the tradition of FDR, HST, but Reagan's program does seem to place too weighty a point of this disagreement, of those impediments are government regulations to keep us saintly and healthy and down. Some of those impediments are laws like the minimum wage law that eliminates low-paying jobs — the only jobs some newcomers to the job market are capable of — thus creating unemployment and all the social evils that come with it.

Yet the most onerous impediment against economic activity is taxation. Heavy taxes discourage people from working and creating wealth. They discourage businesses from expanding. They force labor leaders to demand tax-free fringe benefits for their rank and file rather than wage increases.

Even though he came into office boasting that sever tax system was "a disgrace to the human race," the tax burden has risen wondrously during the reign of the smartest young man ever to graduate from the Plains, Georgia, high school. So has unemployment. So has inflation. Heavy taxes discourage people from working and creating wealth. They discourage businesses from expanding. They force labor leaders to demand tax-free fringe benefits for their rank and file rather than wage increases.

But Reagan is the optimist. Carter is the pessimist. Reagan sees us as capable. Carter sees us as inept and wobbling for Skid Row were it not for the government's watchful eye. Reagan wants to free us to improve our condition. He believes we can do it, and he is unafraid of the outcome. Carter is not so sure we can do much more than pollute our environment, cheat one another, and line up for welfare. He stands with Kennedy and says the citizens' income as government property to be returned to us only for socially useful purposes.

I n sum, Reagan sees the American people as a source of energy. He wants to use it. Carter wants to conserve it for pumping rocking chairs on the front porch, for roosting before the boobs tube, and for other such dynamic purposes. Lewis Lehrman has described the difference between Reagan's economics and Carter's as the difference between Prometheus and Malthus. Prometheus stole fire from the heavens and championed man against the gods. Malthus scowled, shook his old head, and figured that the human race would run off the edge of the Earth instantaneously were it not for crime, disease, war, and age. He, was, naturally enough, opposed to the only one of these pastimes that is any fun.
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WELCOME BACK, CARTER
It’s That ’70s Show ... Again
Biden revives a lost decade with the same old policies — and the same old results.

by Scott McKay

In some ways, the 1970s wasn’t the worst decade in recent American history. The music was pretty good. Between Lynyrd Skynyrd, Led Zeppelin, the Allman Brothers, Eric Clapton, and some of the other rock greats who made their mark in the 1970s, the decade’s soundtrack was actually pretty solid.

At least until disco came along.

That was a pretty good metaphor for the whole thing, actually. The 1970s was a decade spent waiting around for things to either implode or get better.

Our foreign policy certainly imploded with the Iran hostage crisis, and of course from Henry Kissinger to Jimmy Carter, the post-Vietnam stance of “détente” with the Soviet Union was essentially an exercise in waiting around to lose the Cold War.

In the 1970s, folks waited around plenty — and not just to get tickets to the Star Wars premiere. Gas lines were a thing, and not a good thing. In the 1970s, there was a lot of talk about “peak oil,” because at the time it was thought that America had mostly tapped out of its oil supply and the rest of the world would eventually follow suit.

It’s funny how things that are accepted by all the smart people tend to be so wrong. Just ask Joe Biden, our back-to-the-1970s president, who’s been wrong about almost everything since he got himself elected to the Senate in 1972.

Biden’s first major vote was to oppose the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which was a curious stance to take given that his opposition came amid the 1973 Arab oil embargo.

The parallels and ironies of that set of facts alone will make you peruse your vinyl collection in search of some theme music for Biden’s retrograde politics. ELO is a bit too upbeat; Engelbert Humperdinck might be just right.

That’s because Biden’s opposition to oil pipelines — and in fact his near-comic bumbling on that issue — is like a bad acid trip for the domestic energy industry.

Just as he opposed the Trans-Alaska Pipeline decades ago, he opposed Keystone XL in this one. This time Biden actually shut that pipeline down, which infuriated our Canadian allies and, together with a number of other moronic decisions, sent the price of oil and gasoline skyrocketing.

But then Biden dropped the U.S. government’s opposition to Russia’s Nord Stream pipeline, which all but gave the European energy economy over to the Russians. That
happened only a couple of weeks or so after a Russian hacking club had shut down our Colonial pipeline, which supplies some 45 percent of the motor fuel in the eastern United States.

And a ransom was paid to the Russians to reopen it, which reminds one of the Iranian hostage crisis.

Biden’s administration has taken almost no time to recreate the 1970s in other ways, namely juicing inflation to levels not seen since the aftermath of the Carter administration. Inflation isn’t measured like it formerly was, with a lot of the most volatile prices no longer factoring into the Consumer Price Index (CPI). But in April the CPI still showed a whopping increase of more than 4 percent, and commodities like lumber, corn, and copper are through the roof.

Here’s one difference from the 1970s: back then the liberals who ran the country simply didn’t know what they were doing. That’s true of Biden now, but his handlers do know. They don’t believe in peak oil, but they’re trying to create it by shutting down exploration and drilling. They’re also working to create shortages of practically everything as part of the idiotic Green New Deal agenda. And a ransom was paid to the Russians to reopen the pipeline, which supplies some 45 percent of the motor fuel in the eastern United States.

The Black Panthers are also back, though they never really went away. But this time the strident racial Marxism of the Huey Newton club had shut down our Colonial pipeline, which supplies some 45 percent of the motor fuel in the eastern United States.

set is ensconced in an academic discipline of sorts called critical race theory, which has the full faith and credit of the federal government pushing it from grad school to grade school. And the new gang in the streets with raised fists calls itself Black Lives Matter, though what comes out of the mouths of some of its most vocal proponents sounds almost like George Wallace.

A lot of the worst things about the 1970s are back with a vengeance. That same year Biden voted against the Alaska pipeline, 1973, saw Israel under attack in the Yom Kippur War, a dicey affair that ended inconclusively. Israel just recently came under attack by Hamas, which launched rockets from Gaza and used children as human shields to hide behind. Both in 1973 and today, the Israelis are feeling left quite a bit alone by their supposed American allies. Then it was our dependence on Arab oil that explained our tepid support; now it’s Biden’s dependence on efforts to get in bed with the Iranians for some strange reason.

And just like back in the 1970s, there’s a “reopening” of relations with China. When Richard Nixon first broke bread with the Chinese communists, it was seen as a master stroke in international relations, something resembling Tim Curry’s intentionally awful character, at pretty much any local library during Drag Queen Story Hour. Other manifestations of that movie can find Dr. Frank N. Furter, or something resembling Tim Curry’s 1975. There aren’t too many movie screens in use right now, but you can find Dr. Frank N. Furter, or something resembling Tim Curry’s intentionally awful character, at pretty much any local library during Drag Queen Story Hour. Other manifestations of that movie can currently be found on reality TV.

And Planned Parenthood went from cranking up the post-Roe v. Wade abortion machine in the 1970s to now ramping up delivery of sex-change hormones to kids. That reprise of Planned Parenthood’s business model expansion isn’t overly welcome, either.

But we’ve at least managed to trade bell bottoms for skinny jeans. Whether or not that’s a step up probably depends on the wearer.

The Weathermen are now Antifa, with a similar sluggishness on the part of law enforcement to do anything about their mayhem. Jim Jones’s sermons are now regurgitated on college campuses and video blogs by the Squad; everybody’s drinking the Kool-Aid, and the same leftist San Francisco politicians who patronized and propped up Jones are still around, more powerful than ever. At least The Andromeda Strain was just a movie. It seemed more realistic than the response to COVID-19 has been.

The good news is that the 1970s begat the 1980s, as after a decade of mostly awful culture and thoroughly awful politics America was desperate for a Ronald Reagan to lead a renaissance.

Perhaps 2024 will be 1980. That would be fine. We’ll need it after weathering this 2020s show Biden is putting on. Summer 2021
The Democrats actually repealed the “step up in basis” in 1976. It was so unworkable it was never implemented and was formally repealed in 1980 by President Carter and a Democrat Congress.

Biden plans to hire eighty-seven thousand more IRS agents as part of a $80 billion gift to the agency in order to squeeze more money from taxpayers. Biden promises that spending $80 billion on the IRS will drag in an additional $787 billion in tax dollars over ten years. Previous budgets have given less optimistic estimates of how much an additional IRS agent can bring in. They have always fallen short.

Are there billions in unpaid taxes to be collected? This assertion is the magic wand repeatedly waved by Democrats to justify more spending on IRS agents. The projected revenues from more “enforcement” never materialize.

Tazing Guns

Biden supports a “poll tax,” not on the right to cast a bullet but on the right to keep and bear arms in the Second Amendment. Think about that for a minute — a tax on a constitutional right.

During his presidential campaign, Biden promised to impose a $200 federal tax on owning a semi-automatic firearm and another $200 for magazines holding more than ten rounds.

The question was answered when he appointed gun control fanatic David Chipman to be the director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Chipman, like Biden during his campaign, supports a $200 tax on all “assault weapons” — a meaningless term of art as malleable as “infrastructure” that, Chipman claims, includes the eighteen million AR-15s and even .22-caliber rifles in some cases. This is an assault on machine guns but on regular hunting rifles. Oh, and when you try to sell a registered gun in some states, you have to send in your fingerprints, photo, and a multi-page questionnaire that asks for your address and your “reason” for owning the gun.

Given that the average state and local corporate income tax is roughly 6 percent (and many with none at all), most businesses will be hit with a marginal combined corporate tax of 33 percent, ten points above the European average of 23.5 percent.

Given that the average state and local corporate income tax is roughly 6 percent (and many with none at all), most businesses will be hit with a marginal combined corporate tax of 33 percent, ten points above the European average of 23.5 percent.

Voila — one constitutional right taxed away.

The above can arguably be done by executive order or through a reconciliation package that requires a simple majority in the House and informal support from the Senate plus the vice president’s tie-breaking vote.

But should West Virginia sen. Joe Manchin and (for a time) Arizona’s Kyrsten Sinema vote to alter or abolish the filibuster, then the agenda moves to permanently changing the rules to lock in a Democrat majority in both Houses of Congress that will be immune to challenge.

Reining Labor Law

Democrats in the House and Senate have demonstrated almost unanimous support for the PRO Act, a radical rewriting of U.S. labor law that begins its list of horrors by eliminating the “right to work” laws in twenty-seven states that allow workers to say “thank you, no” to being forced to join a union and pay dues or fees.

The PRO Act plagiarizes from California’s AB 5, the law that outlawed most independent contractors, prohibiting them from being their own bosses and forcing them to work as employees so they can be doongralled into a union and have dues extracted. The PRO Act also forces employers to give the home address and private phone numbers of all employees to union bosses so they can visit said workers at home at night and have them sign a piece of paper that will substitute for the previous secret ballot required in any union election.”

One can see why you pay the fee/tax you have to send in your fingerprints, photo, and a multi-page questionnaire that asks for your address and your “reason” for owning the gun.

Democrats face a long-term decline in the structures and funding that make theirs a welfare state with workers in harness and paying through union dues. The Democrats will, as the Daily Kos predicted, be locked out of the House and Senate for at least the next ten years. Voter ID, the law in all twenty-seven EU nations and thirty-six states — gone.

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) would also cease to be a bipartisan, evenly balanced Republican/Democrat commission that requires commissioners of both parties to change and convict a candidate with violating election laws.

If enacted, the law would give the president’s party the tie-breaking vote to investigate, convict, and punish any candidate for House, Senate, or president. That alone would allow the FEC, at present a flawed but neutral judge of electoral misbehavior, into an agency capable of determining ahead of time who wins the House and Senate in 2022. HR 1 already contains the tyranny of the twenty-three Democratic voting yea, just one Democrat voting no, and not a single Republican vote. S 1, the bill’s Senate counterpart, has forty-eight co-sponsors, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is determined to force a vote on the legislation.

Biden’s plan, if he can limit or end the filibuster, is to create the third great wave of government spending and power. The Democrats recently failed for the third time, and the Great Society were the first two “great leaps forward” in building a European-sized welfare state with workers in harness and paying through union dues.
for the reelection of the almost permanent majority in Congress. (Presidents come and go; Washington is run from Congress.)

Half of the federal government, 10 percent of the nation’s GDP, is consumed by programs enacted from 1934–36 and 1964–66. From 1932 to 1994, the Republicans held the House and Senate for only four years — two years under Truman and two years under Eisenhower. That gives the Democrats a more perfect record than most one-party states around the globe. They had more complete control longer than Mexico but not quite as long a run as Castro.

Today, three factors inform the Democrats that they have to seize and maintain power now or lose slowly and then more rapidly if the rules are not changed.

First, in 1994, Republicans ran united, with more than 95 percent of candidates signing the Taxpayer Protection Pledge promising to oppose and vote against any tax hike. They won and held both the House and Senate 60 percent of the time since 1994. No taxes have been raised at the national level except during the four years of united Democrat control with Clinton in 1992–94 and Obama in 2008–10. A Democrat Party dependent on more government employment and increased welfare dependency for votes is terrorized and weakened politically by a Republican Party popular for consistently opposing tax hikes, and government funding for Democrat activists requires the tax increases that Republican control denies them.

Second, labor unions were created to be the funding structure of both the Democrat Party and the progressive Left, but that structure is faltering. Unions once forced 35 percent of the American workforce to pay them dues. But unions, like any parasite, weaken their host, and over time unionized firms and industries declined. Today only 6.3 percent of the private sector is unionized. Since the 1960s, Democrats wisely have opened government jobs to unionization, and 35 percent of state and local workers are now unionized. Today the number of private- and public-sector union members is nearly equal. But the 2018 Jones Supreme Court decision ruled that no American could be forced to join a union or pay dues as a condition of working for state and local government. Over time that 35 percent will drift downward, and the Left cannot fund itself with a handful of billionaires and foundations. The total of fourteen million public and private union members paying an average of $500 dues today amounts to $7 billion each year and $28 billion every four years.

Third, class warfare does not work well when 53 percent of American households have a 401K and/or an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). Unions are less attractive when sixty million Americans work at least in part as independent contractors. The majority of Americans want to be their own boss rather than working for someone else.

To continue as a political contender, the Democrat Party must break the rules and seize power now: dent or abolish the filibuster, pack the Court, add several states, weaken ballot security, and force workers into unions whether they like it or not.

Failing the above, the Democrat Party will drift downward into impotence and irrelevance as union membership — increasingly voluntary — declines and the vast majority of Americans become workers and savers and investors who will vote for a Republican Party that will never raise taxes. Stopping future tax hikes forces the government eventually to reform itself to cost less — and hire fewer Democrat precinct workers. Rinse. Repeat.

That’s a virtuous cycle for the nation — and a death spiral for the party of the left.

Joe Gerig, Tyler Neubah, Evan Maguire, Paige Lambermont, and William Smith (Amile Wilson) Reporting, commentary, editorial, and development roles available. Email Evan Maguire at maguiree@spectator.org.
These are times, to paraphrase Thomas Paine, that try the souls of American optimists. A strain of insane ideologies, from QAnon to critical race theory, is running through our societies like a virus, infecting everything from political life and media to the classroom. Unable to unite even in the face of COVID-19, the country seems to be losing the post-pandemic struggle with China while American society becomes even more feudalized into separate, and permanently unequal, classes. Yet underneath the detritus of the age, a more hopeful future could be emerging.

This recovery starts with a demonstrated ability to absorb and engage an ever more diverse population, including in our vast interior and suburban periphery. Our economic salvation lies with the creation of new businesses, from street-level retail to small entrepreneurial real estate. And the evidence so far is promising: Last year, after years of decline, new business formations rose to 4.4 million applications, according to a Conference Board survey. In a recent survey of over five thousand employed adults, four in ten say they expect to work being done not only from homes but also in dispersed offices and coffee shops. Stanford economist Nicholas Bloom suggests at least 20 percent of the workforce will work remotely even after the pandemic ends, up from 5.7 percent in 2019. Some, like J.P. Morgan's Jamie Dimon, will try to drag workers back into the office even if we have expanded our definitions for minorities, and warn of “cultural appropriation;” Americans are getting together across racial lines, including in the most intimate ways. Consider the rise and acceptance of inter-racial dating, up 40 percent since 2003 according to the Census, and marriage, up from 3 percent in 1967 to roughly one in six now. Ironically, this “multiculturalism of the streets,” as my old colleague Sergio Muñoz puts it, is expanding into unexpected places like the suburban periphery, long castigated as a bastion for white racists. In the fifty largest U.S. metropolitan areas, 44 percent of residents live in ethnically diverse and economically diverse post-pandemic. For many millennials, the hybrid and dispersed model, including suburban satellite offices, addresses issues like enhanced “life-work balance,” something general managers now hold critical to millennials, and particularly to women with children trying to get back into the labor force as schools reopen, according to a Conference Board survey.

So jobs seem destined to emerge from downtowns. It’s just a matter of how many and how far, as people find new opportunities elsewhere. Between September 2019 and September 2020, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the percentage of the population living in large suburban and exurban areas, which range from 20 percent to 60 percent non-white. Nationwide, in the fifty-three largest metropolitan areas, more than three-quarters of Blacks and 60 percent of Hispanics now live in suburban or exurban areas. According to a recent study by the Urban Reform Institute, between 2000 and 2012–16, the urban core population of Blacks declined by six hundred thousand, while the suburban and exurban Black population increased by 4.4 million.

THE NATION’S PULSE

Upward and Outward: America on the Move

Our country is becoming more diverse and dispersed as people leave cities and find opportunities elsewhere.

by Joel Kotkin

Joel Kotkin is author of The Coming of Neo-Feudalism: A Warning to the Global Middle Class, professor, and executive director of the Houston-based Urban Reform Institute.

The dense urban model, with a job-rich core surrounded by feeder communities, is unraveling.
Much the same pattern can be seen among the foreign born. In the past decade, Dallas–Fort Worth has grown its foreign-born population by 30 percent while Los Angeles and Chicago actually suffered declines and New York largely stagnated, as shown in a recent report from Heartland Forward. Rather than settling in a few places, immigrants are engaging in the latest phase of the great American drama, creating new communities and reinvigorating all kinds of existing ones. The second key to America's recovery is investment in its economic resources: supporting its brain trust of entrepreneurs and focusing on domestic industry. For a generation, pundits on the right, such as Kevin Phillips, and even more so on the left, from Paul Kennedy and Jane Jacobs to Martin Jacques, have predicted the decline of the United States. To be sure, the combined forces of policy naïveté and corporate greed have left our economy highly vulnerable to other countries, notably to China. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we found ourselves hostage to China for everything from pharmaceuticals needed to combat the disease's symptoms to masks and sanitary equipment.

We’re not dependent on other countries just for medical equipment. Cars can’t be built because chip-makers have shut-shop so much production to places like Taiwan and Korea; electronic gear does not arrive because it all comes from China and developing countries. China’s rise in particular cost us three million jobs, most painfully evident in the consumer electronics and tech sector. The most notable of these companies is Apple, which is almost completely dependent on production from China. We’re feeding the growth of a ruthless and unscrupulous competitor in China, whose share of the world’s economic output has grown dramatically from 4 percent in 1990 to a projected 21 percent in 2022, according to the World Bank.

But COVID — and the 2016 election of Donald Trump — may have awakened some from their globalist slumber. The annual rate of jobs coming from offshore has increased from six thousand in 2010 to over four hundred thousand in 2019, suggests the Brookings Institution. For the first time in a decade, the percentage of United States manufacturing goods that were imported dropped, a recent Kearny study notes, with the trend continuing. President Biden has promised to spend $500 billion each year on abating climate change — about 13 percent of all federal revenue. The economic impact of this plan, estimates economist Bjorn Lomborg, would reach $5 trillion, more than the entire federal budget.

The second key to America’s recovery is investment in its economic resources: supporting its brain trust of entrepreneurs and focusing on domestic industry. For a generation, pundits on the right, such as Kevin Phillips, and even more so on the left, from Paul Kennedy and Jane Jacobs to Martin Jacques, have predicted the decline of the United States. To be sure, the combined forces of policy naïveté and corporate greed have left our economy highly vulnerable to other countries, notably to China. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we found ourselves hostage to China for everything from pharmaceuticals needed to combat the disease’s symptoms to masks and sanitary equipment.

The junction of demographic diversity, entrepreneurial ingenuity, and intelligent use of our land resources could help us forge a brighter future for most Americans. The current labor shortage, particularly in industry, seems to be a product of low labor force growth and a sinking birth rate; U.S. labor force growth between ages sixteen and sixty-four has dropped from 20 percent in the 1990s to less than 3 percent in the last decade. This creates a unique opportunity for working-class Americans. Even before the pandemic, wages for lower-income laborers were rising for the first time in decades. Today, even with high unemployment over 6 percent and over eight million fewer positions available, there are 7.4 million unfilled jobs. The question is what kind of policy environment would allow this workforce and generous entrepreneurs who may employ them to take advantage of these changes. The current progressive agenda, unfortunately embraced by President Biden, is not what most Americans need. They want jobs and the opportunity to own a home and support their families. In reality, the progressive activists’ agenda is supported by barely 8 percent of the electorate, according to a survey conducted by the nonpartisan More in Common group. Another study found 80 percent of all Americans, including large majorities of millennials and racial minorities, find the “politically correct” agenda “dangerous.”

This suggests that grassroots trends will create conditions for new and often shifting coalitions. Conservatives and many leftists may find areas of agreement on anti-trust regulation, particularly of banks and tech firms. Socially conservative minorities and the traditional Right might find common ground on issues like new sex education standards, child-care policy, or political indoctrination at schools. Conservatives can connect with both minorities such as African-Americans and even more so immigrants, who, according to one recent survey, are twice as conservative in their social views as the general population. None of this suggests that everyone will embrace a revived American future. Oligarchs, Wall Street, and their corporate and nonprofit allies, backed by their libertarian apologists and consultants, will not want to see their power challenged. Various prominent race-bustlers will resist changing progressives’ political focus from “systemic racism” toward promoting upward mobility, and green socialists will find their analyses and policy demands again questioned, despite the best efforts of the social media mafia to block discussion.

In the long run, however, areas of consensus could emerge once Americans, irrespective of their politics, look for solutions that truly align with our interests and reflect our basic values and aspirations. If we do so, America will grow into a new, reinvigorated version of the land of promise it has been for so many generations of its citizens.
The housing shortage in the USA is a function of so many market distortions, perversions, deceptions, and convolutions that there’s little need left in real estate. It’s pointless to even start with the common stanza — we’ll get to some in due course — because the macro view is so much more germane than any raft of numbers. And the macro is this: we’ve entered an epochal crisis of all the organizing elements and principles in advanced economies, and whatever behavior you see out there reflects that disorder, including the property market.

I’ve called this crisis “the long emergency.” It’s largely about losing the energy mojo that made our standard of living possible. Shale oil was the last hurrah of that, and now shale is stumbling because the oil companies can’t make money producing it. More than two hundred shale oil companies went bankrupt in 2020, and production is still down nearly two million barrels a day from the all-time high in 2019. Replacing oil with green energy is just too costly thinking. We’re not going to run suburbia, Disney World, the interstate highways on any combination of solar, wind, hydro, or recycled french-fry oil. Rather, what we face is a declining standard of living, in ways we are only beginning to understand.

This clearly manifests in the declining incomes and prospects of the struggling middle class and the onerous debt loads they have been forced to assume just to keep up payments on their mortgages. Meanwhile, the Federal Reserve jacks stock values, setting up a Potemkin veneer of prosperity that only benefits the 1-percenters.

The biggger picture is that the giant metropolitan cities have shrunk to a scale that is inconsistent with a no-growth economy. There is no option for them but contraction, and the process is apt to be messy because a lot of real estate will lose value, and there will be battles over who gets to occupy the districts that retain value, such as waterfronts. Midtown Manhattan is filled with skyscrapers that were transformed almost overnight from assets to liabilities. At less than 20 percent occupancy, the office towers are all but empty. Hotels are running at a quarter capacity, and landlords are desperate for emergency, with growing numbers of hotel workers losing their jobs.

In a city like Midtown Manhattan, ground-floor retail started to go in places like Midtown Manhattan, with the big cities divided up between the hipster hot spots (New York, San Francisco, Seattle) and the pitiful losers (Baltimore, Detroit, St. Louis), the rural places left over for agri-hustle, the suburbs, with the big cities divided up between the hipster hot spots (New York, San Francisco, Seattle) and the pitiful losers (Baltimore, Detroit, St. Louis), the rural places left over for agri-hustle, and the small towns of America just silently deprecating in the background. All that is changing now. All that is in play, and we are badly missing the message.

For instance, at least 15.9 million people themselves working from home. This was not just a simple dynamic of people running away from the disease. Hot-spot cities were already feeling a drop in the quality of life before the pandemic: a blight of homeless people on the streets, rising crime, and failing public schools. The pandemic pushed the upper middle class over the edge. The amenities that had made city life bearable — restaurants, the arts, big league sports — were shut down, leaving denizens stuck in claustrophobic apartments with nowhere to go.

The office spaces for the cities was working from home. It wasn’t long before that novelty looked like a permanent condition, which suggested the need for a better home office than the kitchen table. Corporations also saw a great opportunity for savings, and many decided to denominate their office space. These effects cascaded. Without hordes of office workers on the streets in places like Midtown Manhattan, ground-floor retail started to die. The Black Lives Matter riots and looting finished a lot of that off. The whole business model of the giant metropolis city, per se, wobbled.

The longer story is that the capital cities have shrunk to a scale that is inconsistent with a no-growth economy. There is no option for them but contraction, and the process is apt to be messy because a lot of real estate will lose value, and there will be battles over who gets to occupy the districts that retain value, such as waterfronts. Midtown Manhattan is filled with skyscrapers that were transformed almost overnight from assets to liabilities. At less than 20 percent occupancy, the office towers are all but empty. Hotels are running at a quarter capacity, and landlords are desperate for emergency, with growing numbers of hotel workers losing their jobs.

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There's a lot of loose talk lately about a “Great Reset.” There will be one, but probably not the grandiose globalist fantasy that many expect, just a much lower standard of living and very different new terms for carrying on daily life. Responding to the coming changes has to do with basically rescaling everything we do from the current mode of gigantism back to things smaller, closer to home, and made or done with much more human attention. The cities will still exist because they occupy important geographical sites, but they will be a lot smaller than they are today, and the journey to that new disposition of things will be long and rocky.

And I would not plant my flag in the suburbs. Most of them won’t even be suitable for retrofit or adaptive reuse. Their demise will be quick and dirty by historical measure. The Jolly Green Giant won’t stride into the housing subdivisions, pick up the houses, and move them closer together to make “walkable communities.” A reset to a lower standard of living implies the houses, and move them closer together to make “walkable communities.” A reset to a lower standard of living implies the houses, and move them closer together to make “walkable communities.”

As the contraction occurs, we’re also likely to see very different modes of household organization, probably multi-generational, and perhaps — get ready for this — including servants, apprentices, and boarders. The houses themselves will have to be built to last. There will be plenty of salvage available from the places left behind, but probably fewer available new materials, even concrete and sheetrock, which require huge amounts of energy and complex manufacturing chains. If you can build a house designed to last, you may live in it for most of your life. Think all this is strange, even outlandish? If you stopped a businessman in Cadillac Square, Detroit, in 1957 and told him his city would be a haunted ruin in the year 2000, without any war happening there, he never would have believed you. History is a kind of great pulsation that swelled and then subsided, leaving us to find less complex modes of subsistence.

After all, there have been many such pulsations in history. The tech industrial orgy of the past two-hundred-plus years may come to be seen as a kind of great pulsation that swelled and then subsided, leaving us to find less complex modes of subsistence. The most favorable places in America will soon be the ones that are the most disfavored today: the small towns and small cities, especially those close to productive agriculture and situated along North America’s inland waterway system — because the economy of this continent will be much more internally focused. The high-tech industrial orgy of the past two-hundred-plus years may come to be seen as a kind of great pulsation that swelled and then subsided, leaving us to find less complex modes of subsistence.

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California has the most generous welfare programs in the country, but its policies have obliterated good-paying jobs and given the state the nation's highest poverty rate.

from the rich whenever Wall Street goes on a bull run, it forces state and local governments to cut services, raise taxes or borrow money in a downturn.” One need only look at how the state weathered the last recession to understand the problem — a free-spending cycle was followed by large public cutbacks. In my view, the state should cut away, but it instead created pressure for even higher taxes.

The president's American Families Plan threatens to do to the federal budget what it has done to California's budget process. Biden argues that successful companies must pay their “fair share,” but they pay far more than their fair share. As Lin noted, “the top 1 percent of [California] taxpayers now generate more than the average rate in other high-income countries of just 18 percent, so we should be cutting our rate, not increasing it.” That's something to consider. Sure, the Biden administration is pushing a global-minimum tax to discourage out-of-country investments, but that will only raise the costs for American companies of everyday items such as insurance and further depress economic growth. It would be sad but fitting if an administration devoted to protecting California's economic policies would see an exodus of U.S. businesses overseas and a worsening of income inequality.

The surplus isn’t a total good-news story. It reminds us of the uneven results of the state's pandemic policies. It leads state officials, basking in self-congratulation, to underestimate the pain economic policies caused. It gives the state's leaders access to far too much cash. During boom times, California's economic policies caused the state's leaders to think they could spend even more than they usually can get away with. More significantly, high-capital-gains rates discourage economic growth, depress job creation, and encourage wealthy people to spend more time pursuing tax-avoidance strategies than investment strategies. California has the most generous welfare programs in the country, but its policies have obliterated good-paying jobs and given the state the nation's highest poverty rate (adjusted for cost of living).

The number of California companies that are leaving the state. This exodus had California's officials concerned about tax implications, though not concerned enough to slow their tax-hiking and spending. Just last year, Oracle, Palantir, and Hewlett-Packard Enterprise moved away, along with a number of billionaires who keep the state's budget afloat, including Elon Musk. The president's American Families Plan clearly won't be as comparatively awful (until the state boosts it again), but it will depress U.S. investment. “Capital is mobile across borders, so higher capital-gains taxes would prompt investment outflows,” wrote the Cato Institute's Chris Edwards. “The U.S. federal state capital gains tax rate of about 28 percent is already higher than the average rate in other high-income countries of just 18 percent, so we should be cutting our rate, not increasing it.” That's something to consider. Sure, the Biden administration is pushing a global-minimum tax to discourage out-of-country investments, but that will only raise the costs for American companies of everyday items such as insurance and further depress economic growth. It would be sad but fitting if an administration devoted to protecting California's economic policies would see an exodus of U.S. businesses overseas and a worsening of income inequality.

Biden’s Administrative State Erases Trump’s Deregulatory Initiatives

The new president is on track to beat his former boss in expanding the Code of Federal Regulations.

Kevin R. Kosar

by Kevin R. Kosar

The Biden administration proposed more than eight hundred new regulations in its first four months in office. These new rules, which will have the force of law if adopted, were issued by seventy-nine different agencies, from the Agency for International Development to the Workers Compensation Programs Office. The three most prolific of the bunch were the Federal Aviation Administration (215), Environmental Protection Agency (188), and Federal Communications Commission (64).

To be sure, many of these proposed regulations are unobjectionable. For example, most of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) proposed rules are mere adjustments of existing airspace use rules or changes that aim to reduce the odds of catastrophic aircraft accidents due to mechanical failures. And who will care whether or not the Federal Communications Commission agrees to Sinclair Media's request for “the substitution of channel 15 for channel 7 at Redding, California in the DTV Table of Allotments”? But other Biden regulatory actions have sparked political ouettes, and deservedly so. The Department of Education (DoE) offers a particularly egregious example with a regulation that would inject wickedness into a civics and American history grants program. The regulation stipulates that “COVID-19 — with its disproportionate impact on communities of color — and the ongoing national reckoning with systemic racism have highlighted the urgency of improving racial equity throughout our society, including in our education system.”

Hence, the DoE proposes to favor grant applications that would fund teaching that “reflect[s] the diversity, identities, histories, contributions, and experiences of all students [to] create inclusive, supportive, and identity-safe learning environments.” To get the money, applicants “must” show their teaching would “take into account systemic marginalization, biases, inequities, and discriminatory policy” and meet various other liberal criteria.

Kooky regulations like this one have drawn a lot of attention. Less commented upon is the Biden administration’s rollback of Trump’s attempt to curb the regulatory state’s relentless growth.

Donald Trump opened a multi-front battle against regulation upon entering office in 2017. He started his deregulatory push by announcing a temporary pause to all regulatory actions and giving the Federal Communications Commission the ability to delete two regulations to be permitted to issue and keep within their spending caps. And who will care whether or not the Federal Communications Commission agrees to Sinclair Media's request for “the substitution of channel 15 for channel 7 at Redding, California in the DTV Table of Allotments”? But other Biden regulatory actions have sparked political ouettes, and deservedly so. The Department of Education (DoE) offers a particularly egregious example with a regulation that would inject wickedness into a civics and American history grants program. The regulation stipulates that “COVID-19 — with its disproportionate impact on communities of color — and the ongoing national reckoning with systemic racism have highlighted the urgency of improving racial equity throughout our society, including in our education system.”

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Hence, the DoE proposes to favor grant applications that would fund teaching that “reflect[s] the diversity, identities, histories, contributions, and experiences of all students [to] create inclusive, supportive, and identity-safe learning environments.” To get the money, applicants “must” show their teaching would “take into account systemic marginalization, biases, inequities, and discriminatory policy” and meet various other liberal criteria.

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agencies establish regulatory budgets by 2018 and tally an annual cost of zero.

Together Trump's deregulatory policies had the potential to make a real dent in the administrative state, which grows relentlessly. On average, the executive branch finalizes four thousand rules each year and proposes another 2,700, and the number of pages of federal regulations grew by ten thousand in the second term of the Obama presidency alone.

As if these deregulatory actions were not enough, the Trump administration also took on "regulatory dark matter." When agencies make rules, they are supposed to follow the regulatory process required by the Administrative Procedures Act of 1946. Unfortunately, that act does not extend to various forms of guidance issued by agencies that have the effect of rules. For example, Obama's Department of Education issued a "dear colleague letter" to post-secondary institutions that explained its new interpretation of Title IX and its application to transgender students. Often the result was a "regulatory dark matter". When agencies make rules, they are supposed to follow the regulatory process required by the Administrative Procedures Act of 1946. Unfortunately, that act does not extend to various forms of guidance issued by agencies that have the effect of rules. For example, Obama's Department of Education issued a "dear colleague letter" to post-secondary institutions that explained its new interpretation of Title IX and its application to transgender students. Often the result was a "regulatory dark matter". When agencies make rules, they are supposed to follow the regulatory process required by the Administrative Procedures Act of 1946. Unfortunately, that act does not extend to various forms of guidance issued by agencies that have the effect of rules. For example, Obama's Department of Education issued a "dear colleague letter" to post-secondary institutions that explained its new interpretation of Title IX and its application to transgender students. Often the result was a "regulatory dark matter."

Altogether then, Trump's deregulatory agenda was ambitious. Indubitably it was marred by some stumbles along the way. There were for example, some conceptual confusions in his regulatory budgeting executive order. Trump's inability to stay focused on any one issue for any length of time meant that implementation of these efforts flagged at points. Any chance that deregulation would take was eliminated by Trump's failure to push Congress to cement these policies into law in his first two years, when the GOP controlled both chambers of Congress.

Regardless, one can be sure of one thing: none of these actions would have been taken during a Hillary Clinton presidency. President Joe Biden has quietly made it clear that he wants to undo this deregulation. He issued a sprawling executive order on his first day in office that included the abolition of Trump's "two for one," regulatory budgeting, and regulatory dark matter mandates.

Biden's and congressional Democrats' enactment of massive new spending legislation will of necessity spawn more regulations to interpret its implementation. They have begun to put the Congressional Review Act to work for them. In late April, the Democrats struck down a Trump rule that raised an Obama mandate about methane, a greenhouse gas. With Hill Republicans showing hostility to many of the administration's big plans, Biden may well try to achieve his goals by circling up his regulatory machinery. Obama did the same when his legislative proposals were rebuffed, unleashing his "pen and phone" approach to governance.

Yet Biden may not be able to entirely reverse Trump's deregulatory legacy. With the advice and consent of the Senate GOP, Trump installed 234 judges on the federal bench. Some of these have heard cases involving agency regulatory actions and are skeptical of agencies wielding legislative power in the form of regulation. "Biden and his agencies will face legal headwinds that Obama and his agencies didn't," Adam White, an attorney and expert on the administrative state at George Mason University's Antonin Scalia Law School and the American Enterprise Institute, who told the Wall Street Journal recently. Already, Trump-appointed judges have blocked Biden policies related to immigration and evictions. More regulatory rebuffs are sure to come.

People as interchangeable components in the economy, in which individual value and cultural norms are meaningless. The neoliberal worldview is hyper-utilitarian and anti-American. People are not interchangeable economic cogs, and individual Americans' cultural values and norms matter in determining national outcomes. But while the dignity and livelihoods of Americans were once held as an important policy consideration, now they're willingly traded away for corporate profit.

Neoliberalism and utilitarianism are antithetical to the founding of the Republican Party as an alternative to the Democratic Party of Clay's day. Republican Party was premised on Henry Clay's American System of Political Economy, which focused on internal improvements (infrastructure), tariffs to protect industry, and subsidies when necessary. Clay's system improved on Alexander Hamilton's many writings, most notably his 1791 Report on Manufactures. Clay's notions of national economics served as a mechanism to make a prosperous American nation in the face of foreign hostility and general poverty. Under this system, the United States became an economic juggernaut.

In contrast to Clay's system, the history of free-trade activism in the United States is closely tied to the slave labor lobby and the commodification of human life. Henry Carey, Lincoln's economic adviser, described the period under the Democratic President James Buchanan as the "great free-trade crisis," during which the slave labor lobby increased its strength in the United States and guaranteed civil war.

Powerful foreign financial and business institutions in London and Paris backed the slave establishment. Both England and France invested in short-term lending in the Antebellum South and traded securities backed by the value of slaves as if they were mortgages today.

At this point, America's economic future looked bleak. The commodification of labor, opening of borders, and expansion of the global system were interlinked. The westward expansion of slavery and lack of profitability meant that slavery would continue and that the United States would become an economic satrap of the European colonial powers. Americans had fought off time and time again. In response to critics of this approach, the slave lobby urged about the importance of efficiency of markets and why the United States couldn't make its own finished goods. This argument is utilitarian. Efficiency for efficiency's sake means that the human condition is secondary to the material, and lives are universally

### Fill it with whatever you need to survive the Beltway

The Beltway is a labyrinthine maze of offices, meetings, and backroom deals that can be overwhelming for even the most seasoned political professional. But with the right tools and mindset, you can navigate the Beltway and emerge victorious. Here are some tips to help you survive the Beltway:

1. **Stay informed**: Keep up with the latest news and developments in your field. Stay informed about the policies and regulations that affect your industry.

2. **Network**: Build relationships with other professionals in your field. Networking can provide valuable insights and opportunities for collaboration.

3. **Be prepared**: Anticipate challenges and have strategies in place to address them. Be prepared to adjust your plans as circumstances change.

4. **Stay flexible**: Be open to new ideas and approaches. Flexibility can help you adapt to changing circumstances.

5. **Stay positive**: Maintain a positive outlook even in challenging situations. A positive mindset can help you stay motivated and focused.

By following these tips, you can navigate the Beltway with confidence and success. Remember, the Beltway is not an obstacle to be overcome, but a challenge to be met with resilience and determination. With the right mindset and approach, you can thrive in the political world.
and elites were excitedly looking to the rise of China while the American people were suffering. Undaunted, Trump took up Lincoln’s mantle by re-introducing policies that had huge success in post-slavery America. It’s ironic that a man many consider a buffoon has a better sense of the wisdom of Republican economic historical norms than the professional apparatchiks. On the other side of the aisle, the Democrat Party seeks to crush the middle-class yeomen of the United States precisely because of their willingness to vote for Trump. Not coincidentally, this, too, has parallels to Lincoln’s time, when Democrats were similarly hostile to yeoman farms owned by citizens, not by services. The average American is not useful for their ends.

Like modern D.C. Republicans, contemporary Democrats are willing to go further to crush middle-class Americans. Using many of the same cheap-labor, outsourcing, and regulatory policies, neoliberals put their needs above the needs of American citizens. Democratic job and innovation policies are predicated upon social cooperation. While American political and business leaders were developing domestic industries in allied countries to secondary them for secondary production, American jobs and investments are similarly still struggling to respond to the problem. The United States must embark upon a journey back to Lincoln’s economics. Lincoln understood that a country must have businesses that own the nation’s production. Trading soybeans for computer parts is what a colony, not a nation, would do. That’s why the British Empire wanted the American colonies to trade commodities and that trade not be limited. American citizens have intrinsic value, and they deserve meaningful work. Work leads to marriage, to children, to homes, and, yes, even to consumer goods. It all depends on businesses and jobs being in our country. Enough with exporting innovation. It is time to rebuild America.

Biden’s Open Borders Drain American Resources

And deny citizens their rightful political role regarding immigration.

by Jason Richwine

R arely is the sequence of cause and effect so clear. The current surge of migrants at our southern border is the direct result of the Biden administration eliminating the Trump rules that had once tamed the flow. Gone are the “safe third country” agreements that helped migrants apply for asylum in countries through which they had already traveled. Gone is the “remain in Mexico” policy that ensured a mere application for asylum would not be a free ticket into the United States. At the same time, Obama-era “catch and release” for minors and family units has made a comeback. As word has spread of this lax enforcement, more and more migrants throughout the world are attempting the journey.

The border crisis has immediate legal and humanitarian consequences, but what can we expect the downstream effects on our economy to be? How will American workers and taxpayers ultimately fare? While advocates insist that the economic effects of immigration are virtually all positive, a fair assessment of the literature cannot support such a rosy outlook. In reality, the economic impact of immigration is mixed. It offers some benefits for Americans but also some costs, and weighing those competing impacts is a matter for the political process. Uncontrolled immigration denies Americans the right to that process.

One of the most straightforward economic benefits of immigration is that it can hold down labor costs, thus reducing the prices of goods and services for consumers. The corresponding downside, of course, is that U.S. workers see a decline in their wages. The National Academies of Sciences demonstrated this tradeoff in its book-length report published in 2016. In one of the report’s complete rows, U.S. residents collected an annual $54 billion in economic gains due to immigration. But those gains required the labor of about $50 billion from U.S. workers to owners of capital.

The distributional impact of immigration becomes even more concerning when we consider which American Resources are affected. Uncontrolled immigration denies Americans the right to that process.

For some real-world evidence that falsifies the “zero impact” theory, consider the multitude of cases filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) against employers who openlyfavor immigrants over natives. The discrimination in these cases is not subtle. “All you American people are fired” and “All you black American people, you will all just go to the office and pick up your check” are actual quotes from an EEOC check.
When immigrants arrive, congested and require new investments in parks, highways, and police — can become a net fiscal drain. Although illegal immigrants have largely the same labor-market impact as similarly skilled legal immigrants, some important fiscal differences exist. The most salient is that illegal immigrants cannot collect Social Security and Medicare benefits, but roughly half do contribute taxes toward those programs. These “free” contributions are an unambiguous benefit for natives, but they are also a ticking time bomb of sorts. Each surge of illegal immigration generates calls for amnesty, and since amnesty centers eligibility for benefits, the “free” contributions would turn into a net cost to taxpayers of over $1 trillion.

Once again, the economic tradeoffs inherent to immigration policy are real. A full accounting of costs and benefits needs to be part of the political process that establishes a sound immigration policy. Unfortunately, the political process cannot operate as long as the border remains porous.

On the positive side, immigrants make the U.S. economy larger. A larger GDP gives the government more tax revenue per-person and lower per-person public goods. As the economy grows, the per-person public goods — such as receiving cash welfare or institutional care, the Trump administration expanded the criteria to include receipt of Medicaid, housing assistance, and food stamps. Upon taking office, Biden promptly canceled this expansion, preferring to admit more immigrants who will use those programs.

Remember, however, that although immigration increases GDP, the vast majority of the economic gains go to immigrants themselves, with little impact on per-person GDP. And unlike national defense, most government services become proportionately more expensive as the population increases. Even services meant to benefit the community as a whole — such as parks, highways, and police — can become congested and require new investments when immigrants arrive.

The “follow the Science” approach once landed by many blue-state governors has been shattered in a collision with reality.

The Death of Technocracy

by Matt Shapiro

Technocracy is a seductive governance strategy because it combines the simplicity of asking your mom if you’re allowed to go outside with a reliance on a class of people who are supposedly devoted to apolitical objectivity. The technocratic approach promises that having a red or blue governor wouldn’t matter because the leader is listening to experts who, given their objectivity, would all come to the same policy conclusions. During the pandemic, those conclusions were not to be based on polls or the whims of the democratic rabble but on the mechanics of how a virus spreads. The goal in all this is an objective and scientific one: to keep infection rates as low as possible.

As we ride into the summer, I’m delighted to see that we’re looking at the COVID-19 pandemic largely in the rear-view mirror, putting our tequila bottles above the windshield of our national cherry-red convertible as we drive into the future, speeding toward the border where we finally can be unencumbered with masks or unexpected school closures.

I’ve been a bit surprised at how quickly things go back to normal when people decide they should. And honestly, I want nothing more than to give a single thought to this crisis ever again. But, as the danger of the COVID pandemic has receded, a noteworthy trend has emerged: the high-handed rhetoric around “following the Science” that was particularly dominant among a few nationally lauded leaders in the early days of this crisis has been abandoned. We must look back to find out why this is, because it tells us something extremely valuable about our leaders, our national culture, and the future of governance. The “party of Science” has quietly abandoned its appeal to science.

There is a theory of governance that is crudely labeled “technocratic.” This is a vision of a ruling class in which the experts of a given field directly command the levers of policy. When Michigan’s Gretchen Whitmer says, “I have made decisions based on science and facts,” when California’s Gavin Newsom says, “SCIENCE — not politics — must be California’s guide;” when Jay Inslee says, “We trust science in Washington,” these governors are claiming that they are not ruling as leaders in their own right but as a conduit for the wisdom of the experts. In the case of the COVID pandemic response, this is a claim that they will do what the experts tell them in order to save lives and guide the actions of the citizenry. It is a promise to submit their own leadership instincts and the desires of their citizens to a panel of experts for review.

Technocracy is a seductive governance strategy because it combines the simplicity of asking your mom if you’re allowed to go outside with a reliance on a class of people who are supposedly devoted to apolitical objectivity. The technocratic approach promises that having a red or blue governor wouldn’t matter because the leader is listening to experts who, given their objectivity, would all come to the same policy conclusions. During the pandemic, those conclusions were not to be based on polls or the whims of the democratic rabble but on the mechanics of how a virus spreads. The goal in all this is an objective and scientific one: to keep infection rates as low as possible.

In the first few months of the pandemic, the technocratic approach seemed like the obvious solution. With people scrambling to figure out how to stop the virus from spreading, scientists had answers. They had metrics like the R0 (pronounced “are-naught”), a value to gauge viral spread; they provided testing targets for opening back up; they gave us detailed

Determined the overall fiscal impact of immigration can be complicated, but the National Academies report offers two intuitive lessons. First, today’s immigrants as a whole are net fiscal drains — receive more in services than they contribute in taxes. Second, although long-term estimates are less reliable, immigrants who arrive with at least a four-year college degree are likely to be net fiscal contributors throughout their lives, while immigrants who arrive with at least a four-year college degree are likely to be net fiscal contributors. The US, may therefore wish to select for the highest-skilled immigrants, but no selection is possible while the border remains porous.

In an effort to reduce the budgetary strain associated with immigration, the Trump administration strengthened the rule against admitting aliens who are likely to become “public charges,” meaning dependent on government for their basic needs. While prior administrations had defined dependency on the political process cannot operate as long as the border remains unsecured. Americans have the right to decide how many and which types of people enter their country each year, but illegal immigration takes that decision out of their hands.

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Matt Shapiro is a data visualization expert and author of the Substack Marginally Compelling.
A study published in clearly eager to remove restrictions and return to normal. There is no
are listening to "the Science" and states with governors who are
case surges or death rates from states with governors who insist they
governance. Instead, we don't see any meaningful difference in either
government. The technocratic approach relied on a phone book of
people can't digest a wide range of public health information at scale.
"Are you a critical worker according to the Washington Critical
infamous and gut-wrenching video, the owner of the Pineapple
Hill Saloon in California showed how the state not only shut her
own mask mandates or dining capacity restrictions up to 50 percent,
the ability for local municipalities and counties to institute their
room to operate.

Despite all the pitfalls of the technocratic strategy, the contrasting
leadership approach is not to toss all science aside and ignore the
experts. Instead, it is for leaders to act as mediators between expert
opinion, the needs of citizens and businesses, and the will of the
people. These are fine lines, and they're ones that Florida Gov. Ron
DeSantis has walked since early in the pandemic.

DeSantis's pandemic response strategy has been remarkable
and provides an exemplary contrast to that of governors who fell for
the technocratic approach. In line with the "five words" advice on public
health, most of his policies can be summarized in a sentence or two.
When the virus first broke out in early 2020, Florida worked to protect
nursing homes and long-term care facilities. After the initial wave of
deadlock, DeSantis's policies were designed to promote stability for
people and businesses while allowing some degree of local control.
This meant encouraging individual caution while allowing businesses
room to operate.

When DeSantis lifted restrictions on restaurants, he left in place
the ability for local municipalities and counties to institute their
own mask mandates or dining capacity restrictions up to 50 percent
without any interference. Many counties did just that, including
the very blue Miami-Dade County, where the residents preferred to
have tighter restrictions. But the policy was a promise to businesses
that they would not suddenly be shut down again. It was a promise
of stability when stability was very much needed.

This strategy of clarity and simplicity over technocratic
knob-fiddling carried over into vaccine distributions. In the "listen to the
science" era, lengthy documents explaining how vaccines would be
distributed, in what phases, and to which people. In my home
state of Washington, we had an eighteen-page form that was a maze
of potential eligibility guidelines. One question on that form was,
"Are you a critical worker according to the Washington Critical
Infrastructure Worker list?" To answer that, one would click on a link
to another document that was itself fourteen pages long defining
critical infrastructure across a dozen industries.
Florida's strategy was this: vaccinate seniors. For the first two
months of vaccine availability, the only requirement was that all
seniors were eligible. Then, in late March, there was one week that
everyone over age forty could be vaccinated. After that, anyone of
any age who wanted a vaccine was eligible. It was as simple as that.

DeSantis's leadership, and hence his policies, were not
aimed at the unvaccinated and high risk.

Solution on page 49

by Davis Fridley
China Will Win Only if America Allows It

Another American Century, if you can keep it.

by John Jiang

In December 2009, the Global Language Monitor, a language-tracking company based in the U.S., declared that the “Rise of China” was the single biggest news story of that past decade. At the time, China’s GDP was barely over $5 trillion, and it had yet to overtake Japan as the world’s second-largest economy.

More than a decade on, Chinese nominal GDP stands at nearly $17 trillion. The nation has established itself as the cornerstone of almost every major global supply chain and is beginning to accumulate military capital at an eye-popping rate.

Wartiness of China in Washington has gone from fringe to universal in a couple of years. For all of his repudiation of his predecessor, President Biden has largely retained Trump’s emphasis on China as an ambitious adversary (policy action, which will be discussed in more detail later, is a different story altogether). Biden has acknowledged the obvious fact that China wishes to supplant U.S. dominance, and he which will be discussed in more detail later, is a different story altogether). Biden has acknowledged the obvious fact that China wishes to supplant U.S. dominance, and he

The otherwise irreconcilable members of this camp are united by a general acceptance of the mainstream view that China has achieved or nearly achieved peer competitor status with the U.S., that it is becoming stronger still, and that it will soon bring down or radically reshape the U.S.-led global order of the post–Cold War period, barring a massive blunder or a change in U.S. posture.

Given these datapoints, as well as the prevalence of China’s structural flaws that they

The self-defeating philosophy of America’s leaders, rather than Chinese competence, may be China’s best shot at preeminent status during this decade.

Sinotriumphalists and Sinoskeptics

Rarely in history does any geopolitical commentator have the privilege, enjoyed by Sinologists and China watchers today, of witnessing an aspiring empire grow in real time and at such an unprecedented rate. Naturally, the question of China’s near-future trajectory has spawned endless pages of expert speculation, much of it radically divergent.

On the one hand, there is the prevailing school of thought that China is rapidly acquiring a coherent grand strategy, has managed to wow many foreign observers, and is on track to do so within the next decade.

On the other hand, there is the more balanced view that China’s economic model, and some of its key points — particularly regarding debt and inefficient state enterprises — are still in play today. Of course, it utterly failed in its prediction of a collapse. When 2011 came and went without a Chinese implosion occurring, Chang wrote a follow-up article asserting that the much-anticipated collapse would occur in 2012. Although that deadline also expired uneventfully, Chang has remained a Sinoskeptic, albeit one who is noticeably less enthusiastic about providing exact dates.

Chang’s diminished credibility has opened the way for many other writers to take on the collapsitarian mantle. The most high-profile of these is probably Peter Zeihan. A former vice president of the leading geopolitical research group Stratfor, Zeihan has written three books that collectively argue that the world’s countries (and especially China) are entirely at the mercy of American foreign policy.

A Reckoning on the Horizon

In his first and best-known work, The Accidental Superpower (2014), Zeihan makes the case that the “long peace” of the post–Second World War order is an aberration that persists exclusively because of America’s combination of naval supremacy and internationalist foreign policy. China, too, is an aberration; it is a unified nation and not a bunch of squabbling, disconnected states (supposedly in its natural state) only because America chooses to actively keep it together.

Zeihan points to China’s rapidly aging population, its challenging geography, its economic model, and its dependence on massive foreign trade and energy imports as the country’s insurmountable weaknesses. Should the U.S. ever decide to stop protecting the world’s seas lanes, Zeihan predicts the immediate return of interstate and interstate piracy, the collapse of the nation’s energy infrastructure, the subsequent drying up of the imports that China needs to survive, and therefore the inevitable collapse of China as a unified polity.

The US, on the other hand, Zeihan argues, is the country that Zeihan’s model. Indeed, he expects it to be the only great power (not just superpower) left by 2030. His follow-up books The Next Superpower (2016) and Destined Nation (2020) have been similarly enthusiastic. Though the new superpower is perhaps a bit more skeptical of China’s ability to maintain its economic growth, Zeihan is noticeably more enthusiastic about the U.S.’s effective energy independence as of the late 2010s has eliminated the last reason that American policymakers had to engage with the rest of the world.

Zeihan predicts that the U.S., with its abundant natural resources, the world’s best farmland, a near-perfect navigable river network in the form of the Mississippi River System, and two oceans to protect China, is on track to do so within the next decade.

Against this backdrop, the Biden–Harrits administration is sure to flounder in its attempts to change course or implement new strategies on China. Biden’s framing of Beijing as an all-in-one ‘competitor, collaborator, and adversary’ has set the tone for a policy approach characterized by indecisiveness and confused priorities.

Though the resilience of the Chinese economy has so far defied the likes of Chang and Zeihan, the Communist Party can only put off the structural flaws that they point to for so long.

John Jiang is an alumnus of The American Spectator’s Young Writers Program. 
argues forcefully that China's... may culminate in a period of Japan-style forced deleveraging for so long. In particular, China's addiction to debt-fueled Party can put off the structural flaws that they point to only so far defied the likes of Chang and Zeihan, the Communist in which he predicted that the pandemic-driven depression of collapse by 2015 at the latest. In 2011, he followed up with a talk group's 2005 and 2010 decade forecasts, in both cases predicting credibility has been his own minor case of Gordon Chang — looks like less of a problem once advanced greenhouse and historically a primary cause of civil conflict and famine. It was released to a lot less fanfare than any of Zeihan's American press is a consequence of overemphasis on the wrong metrics. It was released to a lot less fanfare than any of Zeihan's economic clout is largely illusory and that its perception in the expected future problems, suggests that it is in fact from it. Rather, it will be whether America will voluntarily relinquish its status through folly, exhaustion, or self-destruction. As discussed above, one of the United States's primary... Don't Surrender the Second Cold War

The central question of the twenty-first century will not be whether America will have to deal with hegemonic states and the strategic competition... is even approximately true, then China... The central question of the twenty-first century will not be whether America will have to deal with hegemonic states and the strategic competition... The central question of the twenty-first century will not be whether America will have to deal with hegemonic states and the strategic competition... The central question of the twenty-first century will not be whether America will have to deal with hegemonic states and the strategic competition... The central question of the twenty-first century will not be whether America will have to deal with hegemonic states and the strategic competition... The central question of the twenty-first century will not be whether America will have to deal with hegemonic states and the strategic competition... The central question of the twenty-first century will not be whether America will have to deal with hegemonic states and the strategic competition... The central question of the twenty-first century will not be whether America will have to deal with hegemonic states and the strategic competition...
Yunnan, 1914

It is summertime in the lush hill country of southwestern China, and the air is suffused with a damp mist and with the discordant songs of cicadas and laughing-thrushes. Here, in this terracing, pretender paradise, we encounter the Mission archéologique Segalen-Voisins-Lartigue as it wends its way through the chaotic intermontane valleys and verdant terraced hillocks of Yunnan province, cataloging at every opportunity the mausolea, tumuli, and other ancient monuments that have for centuries lain half-buried in the undergrowth. With the aid of their guides and porters, the three Frenchmen after whom the expedition is named — Victor Segalen, Gilbert de Voisins, and Jean Lartigue, all students of the celebrated Sinologist Emmanuel-Edouard Chavannes — painstakingly ascend from tropical to subalpine zones, traversing the broad strips of moss-cloaked forest that separate what the aboriginal Hani people of the Ailao Mountains distinguish as the “human space” and the “ghost space.” Victor Segalen has no qualms about divining into this spectral realm, pregnant with history. Indeed the very point of his journey, as he will later recount in his epic travelogue Équipée: Pekin aux marches tibétaines, published posthumously in 1929, is to survey the literal and symbolic terrain that “divides into two polar opposites: what has been and what is to come.”

It was at one crucial juncture of that expedition, in a locale nestled against the steep slope of an obscure Yunnan valley, that Segalen chanced to find himself walking along the winding path of Hei-yen-ch’ang, or “earth-prison,” and the exorcists, well-meaning or otherwise, who haunt the Chinese ancient monuments that have for centuries lain half-buried in the undergrowth. They asked what age was this: they had never even heard of the Han, let alone its succession the Wei and the Chin. The astounding story ended with a stern admonition: “Do not be surprised to see people dressed in flowing robes instead of plain-sewn Ch’ing-era style clothing, or Pu Singling’s Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio.”

By Matthew Omolesky

China’s Spectral State

A nightmare.

by Matthew Omolesky

CULTURAL DECLINE

China’s Spectral State

It is thirty-five years later, and much has changed in the span of a mere generation. Victor Segalen is dead; the last emperor, Puji, has been ejected from the Forbidden City; the Ancient Town of Black Salt Pits has again succumbed to obscurity; and the Chinese Communist Revolution has been unleashed. The depredations of the Ch’in or Ch’ing will pale in comparison with the enormities to come. Nothing collapses more quickly than civilization during crises,” wrote Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, and “lost in three weeks is the accomplishment of centuries. Civilisation, life itself, is something learned and invented...” After several years of peace man forget it all too easily. They come to believe that culture is innate, that it is identical with nature. But savagery is always hurling two steps away, and it reigns a foothold as soon as one stumbles.” Victor Segalen appreciated just how quickly a fire stoked for centuries could be snuffed out in an instant, as did another western Sinophile, the American David Kild, author of Peking: The Last Days Of Old China, who memorably described the sad end met by a collection of bronze incense burners once possessed by the Ming emperor’s Hsien Te Emperor, a poignant reminder of the tragedy of cultural genocide.

When Kidd and his Chinese wife, Aimee, moved into the Yu family mansion in Peking in that fatal year of 1949, they found the building’s Eastern Summer studied full of precious artifacts ranging from silver finger-rings and gold-filigree studs to black lacquer boxes and rare jade figurines. None of the curios, however, possessed even a fraction of the value of the seventeen thousand bronze incense burners possessed by the Hsien Te Emperor. As Aimee Kidd explained, it was during the reign of the Hsien Te Emperor that “one of the palace buildings, in which were many gold images, burned to the ground. The building was then reconstructed, but the courtyard where the smoking ruins had later yielded up only numerous lamps of melted gold.” By sheer happenstance a trifle from Burma had arrived at that very moment, providing a windfall of red copper, and then another shipment from Turkestan, laden with ground rubies, followed suit. One of Hsien Te’s officials, sensing a certain serendipity, counseled that all was not lost. “May it please your Majesty,” the mandarin said, “we will not be subjugated, forced to let our hair grow down to our ankles! And they would know that all the others had had their thumbs cut, and that every man in the Empire today is subjugated, forced to let his hair grow down to his ankles! And they would know that all the others had had their thumbs cut. They would know that their right to live has expired, that their city, once protracted in law, is now dissolved, that no longer legally exists, no longer considered necessary. Perhaps these gentle, trembling old men would prove fatal to the community’s blissful repose, and to its very survival."

As an archaeologist and a medical doctor by training, Segalen was mindful of the fragility of cultures and individuals in an inhospitable world, and of the intractability of decay and destruction in this vale of earthly life. In his 1912 poem “To the Ten Thousand Years,” he lamented how “nothing-stationary escapes the hungry teeth of time,” but trusted that “the immaterial shall not wither within your walls, but in you, the slow men, the continuous men,” men like the mysterious changshans that remain? Or is there something more we can still glean from the ancient monuments that have for centuries lain half-buried? The American Spectator

Matthew Omolesky is a human rights lawyer, a researcher in the field of cultural heritage preservation, and a fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

Peking, 1945

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ground rules, although some of medical value, can be put to use only as quickly as possible. The result is a combined effort with various other initiatives that are both difficult and painful, but the object of uninitiated bravery can be achieved. There is no greater evidence of a whole-hearted, cultural community, than the fact that we are able to call it, that was not destroyed but reinforced. The regime, shocked by the tenacity with which people clung to the old ways, redoubled its efforts to institute a cultural revolution, thus forcing the people to call them as nimble choosers, “cow monsters and snake demons,” or as devils, vampires, monsters, and apparitions. “Mao Zedong Thought” was dead but a phantom jade, a wielded with a wide lens that also includes the spreading intercamp breakout, prisons farms, and infamous區域, all fell to the bin with Uighur dissidents, mourning, and remembrance. China’s officials informed us that “the black, the ge are sent down from the sky. They are wild officials who kill five, healthy people, destroying them with hunger or suicide. Their victims, not only at the thought of the beauty that had been destroyed but at the thought of the color fades and no later heat can bring it back.” The effect of this revelation on Kidd was profound, all the more so given the presence of the local communists just outside the mansion gate. It was a moment of sorts: the cold, empty-ballad little innocence put seemed tragic to me. Because I knew what it must have been like when it was alive, I could see that it was dead, and that the very air in which it lived, the tiny ivy should, the porcelain quaile, and the silk-strung harp were dead as well. Never having seen them alive, I had failed to see that this was so.

Within a matter of days, a vindictive servant doused the burners with kerosene and left them burning. Aimee was “completely demoralized,” and Kidd himself was “staggered— not only at the thought of the beauty that had been destroyed but at the fact of the five centuries of life that lay ignored in the dark space of the rooms. The incense burners were no longer an anchorage in these rooms. The last illusion of a link with the past had been broken, and all the emperor’s anointings, paintings and plaques could not give the old China together again.” The symbolism was almost too on the nose — a somber end to the dazzling photos of imperial China, isochrony and the bittersweet sight of an emperor’s burns to the bathroom, and the local council of the Great Leap Forward and Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and a stark lesson in the coniferous impermanence. The endless struggle sessions, purges, religious persecutions, ramshacked museums and manor houses, environmental catastrophes, and tens of millions of corpses made at one point, though on a far more ruinous scale.

Yunnan, 1959

Ten years on, and the Great Leap Forward has arrived at the isolated village of Zhiaoz. The local communist party committee has launched the “Spartak Field Movement,” named after the Soviet Union’s national anthem, one of the party’s strategies to subdue the 3.5 million indigenous Yi people of the Baicaolin Mountains, “Why did working all day and eating just one meal work at all? This is something that I don’t have to work to produce works.” Maeghtinger interpreted to me that “the state was an empty mouth crying out in hunger for words and grain, driving men and women to labor ceaselessly to satisfy its exacting and monotonous demands. To accomplish a spectral unity with nature in the realm of imagination, the faerie is the moment of new incense burners, he expressed his uneasiness.

The resulting splice Zart were “each more beautiful than the last.” Some were not even indescribable with or without twit2ing bits ofruk or goldy”, one “had a smooth gold surface, incredibly bright and shining.” But the value of the Ming-era burners were far beyond, and these were considered to be important cultural property.

Kidd was astonished to discover that these incense pots, forged in the fifteenth century, had never completely cooled. Hard as it may be to believe, thousands of minuscule bricks of charcoal, one after the other, had been kept smoldering for five centuries, filling the rooms of the imperial palace, and then the Yu mansion, with an intoxicating scent. When Aimee produced a burner from the cabinet, one “of exquisite shape, but of a dull, beasty color,” she “saw them, with their gaudy glint, which had grown cold, the color fades and no later heat can bring it back.” The effect of this revelation on Kidd was profound, all the more so given the presence of the local communists just outside the mansion gate. It was a moment of sorts: the cold, empty-ballad little innocence put seemed tragic to me. Because I knew what it must have been like when it was alive, I could see that it was dead, and that the very air in which it lived, the tiny ivy should, the porcelain quaile, and the silk-strung harp were dead as well. Never having seen them alive, I had failed to see that this was so.

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Major-League Sports Faces Major-League Problems

The pandemic and a troubling politics addiction threaten the future of professional sports.

by Larry Thornberry

ot that long ago things were looking up in America. The economy — relieved of heavy taxes and regulation placed on it by eight years of Obama — was growing apace. Americans of all stations and all complexions were returning to work and prosperity. Far-left humbugs were no longer deferred to at the highest levels of the executive department. Their mission to micromanage our lives was at least slowed. There was reason for cautious optimism, even though we all knew the cultural termites — education, entertainment, big news media, universities, corporate America, publishing — continued to eat away at the country’s foundations.

But that optimism was soon brought to an abrupt and complete halt. First there was the spring of 2020 and the arrival of a dangerous virus that proved a threat to both life and liberty. Blue-state politicians abused this very real threat for political purposes, as they do all crises, real or manufactured (see climate change and systemic racism). It’s been all downhill since. We have the bug on the run, but there’s no evidence that the Left will ever be ready to let go of it, as it helped so much in allowing Democrats to win the White House and both the U.S. House and Senate last year. The termites are now in full control, and we have a Democrat administration that’s aggressively, and all too successfully, pushing an agenda that combines crony capitalism with cultural totalitarianism. The future of just about everything in America is in question.

And this includes sports. It’s an institution that many considered solid and untouchable, even as various controversies roiled the nation. It’s not hard to see why so many thought sports was safe, a source of unifying entertainment and an escape from the tendentious. No more.

Americans, particularly those of the male persuasion, have always been sports crazy. We love our games. We love playing them, watching them, and talking about them. The love of our sports teams and the memories they’ve blessed (or cursed) us with have been part of America’s cultural connective tissue for generations. A fair fraction of the father-son bonding in America has taken place with the aid of sports. My late father and I were no exception.

Professional sports leagues have profited greatly from Americans’ love of, practically obsession with, sports. Leagues have survived, often thrived, through world wars, a Great Depression, and various cultural and political upheavals. Heck, sports even endured and survived Howard Cosell. But there are indications that the sports gravy train may be slowing. Like other sectors of the American economy, major-league sports took a major financial hit due to the COVID pandemic. When it became clear last...
year that pro sports would be played before a empty house, first magazine estimated the four majors together — football, basketball, baseball, and hockey — would lose about $5 billion in revenue. This March the magazine reported the final figure was closer to triple that amount. (Caution: Financial numbers — and there are many ways to compute these — are a closely held thing in professional sports, as they are in most industries. There are Hollywood accountants who can demonstrate with charts and graphs that Gone With the Wind has yet to make a dime. So the following numbers should be taken as approximations.) Unlike when I was a youngster and baseball was indeed the national pastime, number one on all scorecards, football is now by far America’s favorite sport, and the National Football League its richest league. Most sources put NFL revenue for the 2019 season at $16 billion. That’s up from a mere $6 billion in 2004. For 2020, a season with very few butts in stadium seats, the NFL took in $12 billion, thanks mostly to television revenue. By the time the NFL season begins in late summer, fans will be returning to stadiums. But that $4 billion is lost forever. And it’s not chump change, even for a sports league whose commissioner’s take-home package alone is greater than the GDP of several countries.

First reports that Major League Baseball lost between $2.8 and $3 billion in the pandemic-shortened, fan-free seaon. ESPN reports that the NBA’s revenue dropped about 30 percent for the 2019–20 season, about a $1.2 billion loss, with continued losses adding up thanks to attendance restrictions continuing into the 2020–21 season. In a CBS News report early this year, these losses were deemed “substantial but not crippling.” Assuming no new pandemic, no backsliding on COWID, or no other excuse for politicians to kick the economy, including sports stadiums, again, these significant losses will be a one-off. But even with stadium turnstiles back in action, there are trends that could be lasting and should concern those who run professional sports, even college “amateur” sports, which on the financial level are pretty damn professional."

T

he first blight on big league sports today, in football, is the games and arenas, players wear scolding messages on jerseys, games are called for political reasons, and leagues strike poses with sappy “public service” ads and player testimonials that amount to political witnessing. Leagues do things like move all-star games to protest perfectly reasonable election laws and buggy teams to change their mascots if any leftist indignation group objects to them. No more Washington Redskins. Goodbye Cleveland Indians. And even though every survey of real Native Americans shows a large majority either don’t care about Indian team names or like them. No matter. Chronic malcontents and woke white snowflakes don’t like the names, so they have to go. Speaking of snowflakes, they’re the second long-range problem sports will have to deal with. Young people are less interested in sports than previous generations have been. Many boys would rather play computer games than watch a three-hour ball game of any kind. Clearly the national attention span has shortened since our lives have been taken over by the internet, smartphone, and instant everything, leaving balled-up practices like reading, serious analysis of anything, and watching sports in a real cold and dark. To put it bluntly, we have an entire generation addicted to opinion, not everything. And those are terribly divisive. There is no unity, no common ground, only stark differences. And this has caused loss of ticket sales, TV viewership, and fan interest. It will cause loss of future for professional sports. But it should be clear enough now to the NFL, NBA, and MLB that their check-engine light has come on. How well they do in the long — and even the medium — run will depend on what repairs they make. At the moment, there’s no reason to think they’ll get the engine running smoothly again.

The Modern Recruiter, 2021 (Bill Wilton Studio)
Deregulated Drinking: A Rare Pandemic Pick-Me-Up

The wave of rolled-back restrictions shows how less government is more — and more fun.

by C. Jarrett Dieterle

Various levels of government leaned at the chance to deregulate and eliminate burdensome rules that handicapped our ability to overcome the impacts of the virus. For instance, laws and regulations around telehealth were streamlined, occupational licensing requirements were modified to allow health-care workers to move and work across state lines more easily, and zoning laws were amended to permit restaurants to add more outdoor sidewalk seating.

One sector in particular underwent a robust regulatory bonfire, and, lucky for us, it was our old friend — booze. When the pandemic hit, restaurants and bars were forced to close overnight or operate with substantially reduced capacity. The now-ubiquitous neighborhood craft distilleries, breweries, and wineries suffered similar fates as social distancing protocols and stay-at-home orders brought the food and beverage industry to its knees.

Grocery stores and restaurants quickly pivoted to curbside pick-up and delivery models in an attempt to weather the storm, but things were not so easy when it came to alcoholic beverages. While restaurants could offer takeout nachos, most states forbade them from throwing in a to-go margarita. And while grocery delivery was already taking off pre-pandemic, many locales in America did not allow shoppers to have their favorite bottle of wine delivered to their door alongside their eggs and milk.

As with telehealth, occupational licensing, and zoning laws, COVID-19 shifted state lawmakers’ attitudes toward alcohol significantly. Government officials were forced to confront the reality that alcoholic beverages in twenty-first-century America were still largely governed by outmoded laws that sometimes dated back to the pre-Prohibition era. Governors and mayors began using emergency orders to temporarily clear away these burdensome and antiquated rules, and once state legislators and city councils began to meet again, efforts commenced to make many of these changes permanent.

States like Iowa and Ohio permanently permitted bars and restaurants to sell to-go cocktails, and many others are currently looking to follow suit. Georgia and Louisiana expanded the ability of grocery stores to deliver alcohol, and Kentucky passed a landmark bill to allow bourbon and whiskey and start sharing this story of how less government can be the perfect tonic in a crisis.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry found itself on the brink, hoping that all its hard-earned growth would not suddenly disappear overnight. Thanks in part to smart and timely efforts to shrink and reform government regulations, many of these businesses have found a way to overcome these issues facing the country. But to do so is to vastly underestimate the economic impact of the alcohol industry in today’s America. The craft alcohol boom has launched an explosion of breweries, distilleries, and craft cocktail bars from sea to shining sea, and the industry has become one of the country’s best engines for job growth in recent years.

C. Jarrett Dieterle is a senior fellow at the R Street Institute in Washington, D.C., and the author of Give Me Liberty and Give Me a Drink!
It turns out that the best way to wear your politics on your sleeve involves wearing them over your mouth.

by Daniel J. Flynn

Like the dark pajamas for the Khmer Rouge or the silver and black for Raider Nation, the mask came to represent a national uniform for the United States of Social Justice.

An “In This House We Believe Science Is Real” lawn sign once sufficed to announce one’s political commitments. But that improvement on the Nicene Creed offers little consolation. Those afflicted with political obsessive-compulsive disorder saw their prayers for coerced sameness answered in the mandates. Now this freedom?

Dana Stevens writes at the Atlantic that “some of us simply find comfort in going around with a scrap of cloth on our face” to protect the “emotional” safety of others. She claims that “wearing a mask in public spaces — especially indoor, where transmission is more likely — serves a broader social purpose: It says to those around us that, whatever our vaccine status, we value community safety.”

Ashley Fenters of the Washington Post laments that mask removal means the end of “a 14-month respite from the murmurs, raised eyebrows and directives to ‘Lighten up,’ or ‘Gimme a smile!’ — mostly from the oblivious ingrate heirs, they imagine their vices — sanctimony, preaching, prudence — as virtues. Ironically, the coverings they aggressively pushed on others best serve their main impulse of broadcasting their goodness now that fewer people heed their advice (once issued both verbally at great volume and behaviorally in silent but demonstrative crossings of the street at the approach of bare-faced pedestrians).

Can Moderna create a cure for this sickness? In our up-is-down world, the muzzle provides for expression. And the optioned feel a tic to share their views on everything as ideology becomes religion and the periodic orgy provide opportunities to nostalgically vest the people still hiding behind their masks with their favorite facial accoutrement offers little consolation. Those afflicted with political obsessive-compulsive disorder saw their prayers for coerced sameness answered in the mandates. Now this freedom?

A “Monsters Are Due on Maple Street” quality colored pandemic America, as primarily an excuse for imparting political opinionated feel a tic to share their views on everything as ideology becomes religion and the periodic orgy provide opportunities to nostalgically vest the people still hiding behind their masks with their favorite facial accoutrement offers little consolation. Those afflicted with political obsessive-compulsive disorder saw their prayers for coerced sameness answered in the mandates. Now this freedom?

Yes, you read that correctly! As we all know, there sadly aren’t many conservative colleges. Grove City College, however, is one. In fact, The Princeton Review ranks us the #1 Most Conservative College in America. We have been consistently ranked #1 for Students Most Nostalgic for Reagan, and we’ve been ranked the #1 Best Buy in America by Money magazine.

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