

Other Views

So now Republicans hate Coke and baseball

Republicans and corporate America have been conjoined for so long that any breach in the bond is almost impossible to imagine. Yet we're seeing one now, thanks to the GOP's decision to give free rein to its authoritarian impulses.

The way it has long worked is easy to explain. Corporate America shovels big bucks to the Republicans, who in turn ensure via legislation that



DICK POLMAN
POLITICAL COLUMNIST

corporate America makes as much money as possible, which in turn ensures that the Republicans will be further rewarded. That's why Mitch McConnell has long championed corporate donations as "free speech" and insisted that those donors have the right to give money without disclosing their names.

But now that some corporations have belatedly decided it's in their best business interest to oppose the GOP's vote-suppression efforts (most notably in Georgia), all of a sudden Republicans like McConnell are outraged. Apparently it's freedom when corporations say and do stuff that echoes the GOP agenda, but if they dare stray from the lockstep party line — and speak ill of the strategy to sabotage democracy — then Republican heads detonate with maximum decibels.

And so now that Georgia-based Coca-Cola has denounced the state GOP's voter-suppression law as "a step backwards," and that Georgia-based Delta Airlines has accurately pointed out that the law "will make it harder for many underrepresented voters, particularly Black voters, to exercise their constitutional right"...well, suffice it to say that McConnell and other party hacks are suddenly not big fans of corporate free speech.

In a statement Tuesday, McConnell complained that "parts of the private sector keep dabbling in behaving like a woke parallel government," and he warned that unless these firms cease their "frantic left-wing signaling," they would pay a steep price: "Corporations will invite serious consequences."

You have to laugh at these people. They're all for corporate free speech — unless corporations say something they dislike. Then their impulse is to threaten some form of punishment. (A government crackdown on rebellious corporations? Gosh, that smacks of socialism.)

McConnell and his pals don't seem to grasp the irony of the situation: Coca-Cola, Delta, and Major League Baseball (plus, in Texas, American Airlines and computer magnate Michael Dell) have decided that defending the right to vote would best serve their interests in the free market. They decided that silently abetting authoritarianism would be bad for business, pissing off customers as well as their employees. Yes, folks, it's all about the free market — which Republicans purport to worship.

Granted, you can make the case that Republicans have reason to be angry. After all, corporate America has long pumped money into the GOP, to the same state legislators who've been concocting vote suppression bills nationwide. Since 2015, corporations have reportedly steered \$50 million to those state legislators — not necessarily for the express purpose of suppressing the vote, but simply because they were Republicans.

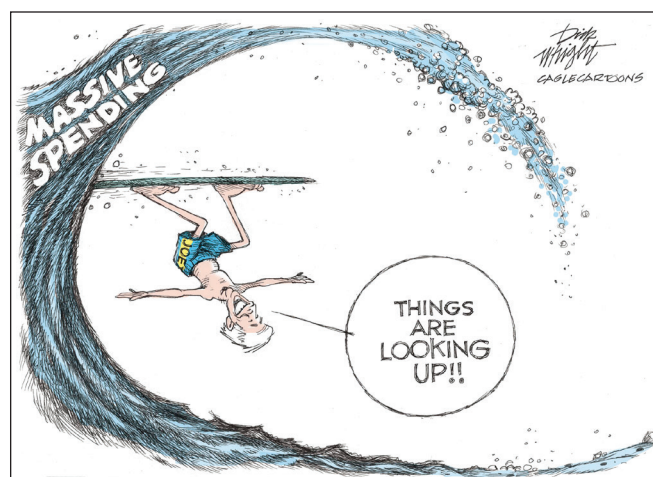
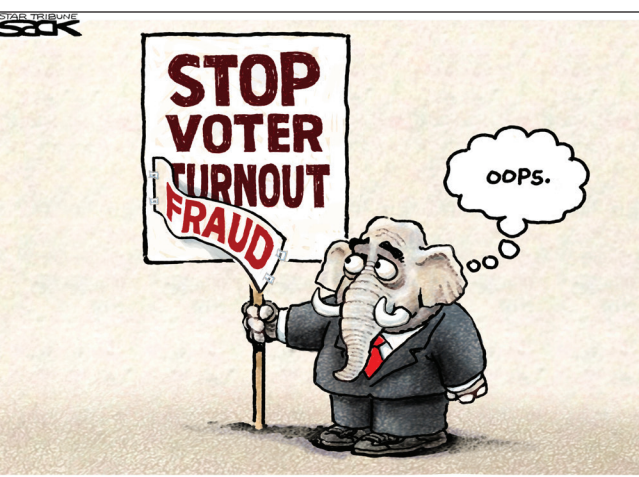
Their state legislative races are financed by the Republican State Leadership Committee. Here's a partial list of recent corporate donors to the RSLC, just give you a flavor: 3M, Amazon, Anheuser-Busch, Autozone, Bank of America, Best Buy, Boeing, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Capital One, Charter Communications, Chevron, Citigroup, Coca-Cola, Comcast, ConocoPhillips, Ebay, Eli Lilly, ExxonMobil, Facebook, FedEx, General Motors, GlaxoSmithKline, Google, Hewlett-Packard, Home Depot, Honeywell, iHeartMedia, JPMorgan Chase, Juul, LexisNexis, MasterCard, Microsoft, MillerCoors, Motorola, Nationwide, PayPal, PepsiCo, Pfizer, Raytheon, Reynolds American, Sheetz, Target, TIAA, T-Mobile, UnitedHealth, UPS, Visa, Volkswagen, Waffle House, Walgreens, Wal-Mart, Waste Management, Wells Fargo, and Yum Brands.

So corporations have long been political players, lobbying for interests that typically align with Republican priorities; the only thing that's different now is that, from the GOP's perspective, they're suddenly playing for the wrong team.

One more irony: The GOP, in its knee-jerk opposition to President Biden's infrastructure plan, insists that it's unfair to finance the rebuilding of America by hiking taxes on corporations. So what are they going to do now — agree to hike taxes on corporations, as punishment for "woke" free speech?

Three words: Pass the popcorn.

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Education Corner

Testing, testing, testing — Why?



SCOTT SMITH
EDUCATOR

Testing has become quite controversial in education. We often hear about students' test scores or teachers reporting test results. Then in social groups, you might experience people discussing that there is too much testing imposed on our children in schools. Is there a misconception?

Depending on your generation and where you attended school, perspectives on student testing have probably changed dramatically. Testing in schools in the past was most often for determining grades in classes over material taught by the instructor. Often those tests were teacher-developed or may have come with the curriculum covering the information taught during the instruction. As we have moved to a more mobile society we have come to expect students to learn the same material whether in a little country town or a large city, no matter what geographical location education looks different than 25 years ago. Publishers created curricula for all subjects along with creating tests to ensure that all students receive the same instruction.

Testing in education has changed over the years and we have also been able to learn more about how our brains learn and develop, thanks to sciences. We have learned that waiting for a student and allowing additional time for them to catch up may not be the best and may make it even harder for the child to learn because of what we now know about brain development. Borrowing from the sciences and using the scientific process of gaining a baseline, applying theory and then checking for change means education takes a different path.

WRITE TO US

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In education, if the child is not showing understanding we are now able to provide instruction at their level and check for understanding by monitoring, which is often referred to as testing. If the child understands the concept, they are ready to move on; if not, some reteaching is necessary. Past practice often was to assume students understood it because we taught it to the whole group or they will catch up — and some will, but many don't and fall behind. This is true in both math and reading. Moving on and hoping in time they will catch up is more of a myth than reality.

Back in the 1970s, publishers were creating reading materials as fast as they could. Then they set out to show how their programs were superior to teacher-based programs. These curricula provided instructional materials along with assessments. During the 1980s, studies were completed showing when teachers used and followed their programs, students scored higher. They took their results to the U.S. Department of Education getting them to sign off that teachers needed to follow the programs with fidelity.

We have all experienced changes in the medical field and the impact on our health and lives. Look at diabetes for example. Twenty years ago the way we tested sugar levels is much different than today. It has been life-changing for many. Schools that have embraced using data to inform edu-

cation rather than teaching what a teacher feels is best have experienced greater student learning. There are not many people who would want the doctors to treat their cancer as they did 40 years ago. The same should be true with how we educate our youth.

Students are assessed more in today's schools than in the past. In the younger grades, the short screeners used can determine if the student knows the skill or needs additional support and are usually less than 10 minutes. As a teacher, having to screen each student can seem overwhelming and feel like all they do is test, but the students are not spending all that time testing. The teacher can use that information to adjust their lessons to give additional instruction on skills a student might be struggling with within the curriculum. This then allows the student not to fall behind and keeps their skills moving forward, whereas in the past students often fell so far behind it was hard for them to catch up with their classmates.

Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in its teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia Oregon board as its parent/teacher liaison.

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THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

www.lagrandeobserver.com

Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, Oregon 97801
Published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays
(except postal holidays) by EO Media Group,
911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850
(USPS 299-260)

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