

WEEK 32, 2019

THE EPOCH TIMES

OUR

NATION

President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump meet with a survivor of the Dayton shooting massacre at Miami Valley Hospital in Dayton, Ohio, on Aug. 7, 2019.



**Trump Comforts
Victims in Dayton
and El Paso 4**

Catholic Foster Care Agency Fights Discrimination Charge

JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES



MATTHEW VADUM

A Roman Catholic charity and two foster parents are asking the U.S. Supreme Court to take up their case after a federal appeals court ruled that Philadelphia could refuse to work with the charity because it has a religious-based objection to same-sex marriage.

The case dates to March 2018, when Philadelphia officials said the opioid crisis had created an urgent need for 300 new foster care families in the city. Days later, the city blocked Catholic Social Services (CSS) and Bethany Christian Services from taking on new foster care cases, alleging the agencies had run afoul of the city's Fair Practices Ordinance, which forbids "discrimination" on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

In 2017, CSS placed 226 of the city's children in foster homes and Bethany Christian Services placed 170, according to the Heritage Foundation. There are about 400,000 children across the United States waiting for foster care.

As a ministry of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, CSS describes itself as "one of the largest private non-profit charitable providers of social services in Pennsylvania," with a "200-year history of serving people of all faiths." CSS "is comprised of 12 separate 501 (c)3 charitable corporations, which are together governed by a Board of Directors, who ensure that all funds are used solely for programs and services that assist and support those in need."

In its most recent publicly available IRS filing, for the year ending June 30, 2017, CSS reported having 455 employees and 4,146 volunteers. It also disclosed gross receipts of \$24.6 million for that year, and having \$29.7 million in assets and almost \$6 million in liabilities.

Defenders of religious agencies' involvement in foster care say the religious faith of the organizations is a positive thing. Although 80 percent of foster parents drop out of the process in the first two years, among "the remaining 20 percent who persevere through what is clearly a difficult, frustrating process, faith-based families are far more likely to stick with that and attain the goal of becoming a foster family or adopting a child in foster care," said National Council for Adoption President Chuck Johnson.

"Faith does play a significant role in terms of the families who are stepping up to adopt children in foster care," Johnson added.

Certain religious adopting agencies such as CSS choose to put children only with mother-father couples, in accordance with their Christian beliefs. But left-wing groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Lambda Legal have filed lawsuits in various states to prevent religious-based agencies such as CSS from helping children who need foster care placement.

Massachusetts, California, and the District of Columbia have also chosen to kick faith-based agencies out of the foster care system, displacing thousands of children. In Illinois, upwards of 2,000 kids were report-

Grace Gonzalez sits with her adopted daughter Bella Gonzalez, 2, during a ceremony for National Adoption Day in Miami, on Nov. 20, 2015. National Adoption Day is Nov 21.

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Chuck Johnson, president, National Council for Adoption

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Tina Trent, conservative activist

The Supreme Court of the United States in Washington on May 7, 2019.

edly displaced when Catholic Charities got out of the foster care business.

Petition to Overturn Precedent

Philadelphia's decision to close the door on CSS was upheld by the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals on April 22, when it denied CSS's request for a preliminary injunction against the city, citing a Supreme Court precedent arising out of an Oregon case known as Employment Division v. Smith.

CSS has since asked the Supreme Court to take up the case, arguing it has become a victim of religious discrimination, contrary to the religious freedom protections of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

In its petition for certiorari, or review by the high court, CSS states that Philadelphia was attempting to force the agency "to act and speak in a manner inconsistent with its sincere religious beliefs about marriage."

CSS explains that "as a Catholic agency, CSS cannot provide written endorsements for same-sex couples which contradict its religious teachings on marriage." Philadelphia acted against the agency, even though "CSS's beliefs about marriage haven't prevented anyone from fostering."

CSS asks the Supreme Court to overturn previous precedent and determine "[w]hether" a government violates the First Amendment by conditioning a religious agency's ability to participate in the foster care system on taking actions and making statements that directly contradict the agency's religious beliefs.

Masterpiece Bake Shop

After filing the petition, one of CSS's lawyers, senior counsel Lori Windham of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a non-profit and public interest law firm, wrote on Twitter, "The next big religious freedom case just landed at SCOTUS."

In an interview with The Epoch Times, Windham summarized her client's case.

If the city's decision to stop allowing foster children to be placed with families by CSS stands, the charity will have to shut down

its work in the field, she said.

CSS, whose foster care services operate at a financial loss, used to have seven employees who focused on foster care, but now the figure is down to three, Windham said. There used to be 120 children under its umbrella, but the number has fallen to just 60, because no new cases are being processed, she said.

"Catholic Social Services' actions are protected by the First Amendment," Windham said. Yet Philadelphia, as the petition states, is asking the organization "to act and speak in a way that's contrary to their religious beliefs and that's not something a city government can do," she said.

Windham said she is optimistic about her client's chances because of the well-publicized Masterpiece Cake Shop ruling, which held those city officials can't denigrate and disparage religious belief. In that decision, the Supreme Court held that under the First Amendment, a baker couldn't be compelled to bake a cake celebrating a same-sex wedding.

Conservative activist Tina Trent, a Roman Catholic who was a former candidate for District 26 of the Georgia General Assembly, and who previously worked as an advocate for foster children in Florida and Georgia, said that CSS, which has branches across the country, "does a tremendous job of working with these families."

CSS "is one of the largest, most experienced and most successful providers of placement and foster care support services and if you take them out of the equation, you're limiting the different kinds of resources available to serve these children, who have a whole lot of different needs."

"Some need family settings, some need group homes, and CSS is one of the oldest and most experienced agencies meeting the needs of these children with diverse problems," she said.

"The foster care system is not supposed to be about the foster care parents; it's supposed to be about the children they are helping, and there are children who are going to go without the help they need, so long as there are activists putting their agendas ahead of the needs of the children."

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES



Conservatives Mobilize to Stop 'Red Flag' Gun Confiscation Law

Pro-gun activists target Republican senators, charge 'red flag' laws violate rights and don't work

ZACH GIBSON/GETTY IMAGES



PATRICK HOWLEY

Pro-gun activists are launching a nationwide pressure campaign to stop a proposed "red flag" bill announced in the U.S. Congress by Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.).

In the wake of the mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, President Donald Trump has called for a condemnation of white supremacy, stronger background checks, and reform of mental health laws, among other measures. Washington lawmakers are looking to harness the national outrage over the shootings to pass a federal red flag bill.

The activists hope that Trump will eventually reject such a bill, which would likely create financial incentives from the federal government for states to install broadly written programs for gun confiscation. This kind of program, which is already active in 17 states and Washington, allows gun owners' relatives, police, and possibly members of the community to petition to remove firearms from gun owners who are perceived to be an imminent threat to themselves or others.

'Scary Precedent'

"People need to be able to defend themselves," said former South Carolina state Sen. Lee Bright as a grassroots movement develops in the state to block Graham and U.S. Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) from passing the bill.

"I wish they were leading in the direction of liberty, and not infringing on the Second Amendment. Anytime something like this happens, the Left uses this as an opportunity to take away people's rights. I wish my senators would lead in the right direction. I always considered Tim Scott a friend, but we have to respectfully disagree on this issue."

Former Maine state Sen. Eric Brakey told The Epoch Times: "You wouldn't even know you were being targeted until government agents were knocking on your door."

"Earlier this year, Maine people by the thousands told our state politicians to reject red flag gun confiscation. Senator [Susan] Collins and Senator King should think twice about supporting this unconstitutional gun control proposal against the Maine people," said Brakey, who ran against U.S. Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) in 2018.

In Mississippi, state Rep. Dana Criswell is urging his state's U.S. senators to influence party leadership on the issue.

"If they were standing in front of me right now, I would say please you've got to stand against the red flag laws," Criswell told The Epoch Times, referring to Sens. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.).

"They are undermining our Constitution. When someone can report you at random and the police show up and want to confiscate your guns—even if they say it's just temporary—that is a dangerous scary precedent. I beg them to fight against it. I hope that they will see the error in this and appeal to the president and say, 'We've got to find another way.'"

"I would beg them to stop this now, by speaking out vocally against it. Speak out very loudly against this. The people of Mississippi do not want this," Criswell said.

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Thune a Target

"Every single red flag gun confiscation law passed at the state level is a rights-shredding, due process-violating abomination," Dudley Brown, president of the National Association for Gun Rights, told The Epoch Times, predicting a massive activist campaign to stop the red flag effort by focusing primarily on South Dakota's Sen. John Thune and other Republicans.

"The fact that Sen. Thune wants the federal government to dole out millions of dollars to state coffers in order to bribe them into passing gun confiscation won't sit well with his constituents in South Dakota," Brown said. "Thune is finally showing his true colors. He'll give up your gun rights to appease the D.C. Swamp and left-wing media."

In South Dakota, activist Shad Olson, state Sen. Stacey Nelson, Bennett County commissioner Judd Schomp, and Oglala Sioux Tribe official Bruce Whalen are pressing Thune to urge him to reject the red flag program. More South Dakota lawmakers were expected to join the effort.

"It is with great disappointment and even greater sense of urgency that the undersigned legislative and civic leaders from your

home state of South Dakota stringently urge you to reconsider your vocalized support for Red Flag Gun Confiscation laws, in any form, and reconsider your stated intention of pushing such legislation in the United States Senate," according to a letter, obtained by The Epoch Times, to Thune from the South Dakotans.

"Red Flag Gun Laws are a violation of due process under Constitutional jurisprudence and a clear infringement on the 2nd Amendment right to bear arms of all law abiding American citizens who are now being targeted by political opportunism and the most tyrannical threat to gun rights thus far seen in America's embattled struggle to preserve our Bill of Rights," the letter states.

"Beyond these blatantly catastrophic connotations, unintended consequences of such an abandonment of Constitutional liberty include disproportionate impacts on our brave combat veterans who will be deprived of defending themselves after defending our nation courageously and at great cost, as well as potential avenues of personal and vindictive retaliation against law enforcement officers and first responders via reports made by the very violent criminals they protect our communities against," the letter states.

"We urge you, Senator Thune, and the rest of your U.S. Senate colleagues, in the most serious possible language, to abandon what would be a disastrous course of manipulated destruction of the 2nd Amendment and erasure of due process and the crucial American assumption of innocence until proven guilty," the letter states.

Dudley Brown, president, National Association for Gun Rights

Conservatives elsewhere in the country are activating.

"Alaskans won't tolerate having either of their senators vote for any Constitution-destroying red flag legislation," former Alaska State Senator Joe Miller, a Republican, told The Epoch Times.

"With one of the highest levels of gun ownership in the United States, and the highest percentage of veterans, Alaskans understand that their rights are on the line. They will not submit to any irrational, knee-jerk gun control efforts that undercut their Second Amendment rights," Miller said.

In Alabama, conservative U.S. Senate candidate and former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore is fighting the federal bill.

"Liberals never let a crisis go to waste. Red Flag bills allowing weapons to be seized merely upon the complaint of another without due process of law are unconstitutional under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution. What's next after Red Flag bills? Your car or perhaps the person itself? Red Flag

bills should receive a red flag," Moore said in a statement.

Like 'Minority Report'

Gun expert John Lott told The Epoch Times that the red flag federal proposal is a dangerous mistake for Republicans.

"Everyone wants to stop mass shooting, but let's do something that'll work. Red flag laws will cause more problems than they'll solve," Lott said. "I know a woman whose husband was murdered in front of her. She was being stalked, and her husband was killed by her stalker. She was depressed. If she knew that speaking to relatives could result in informing on her, she wouldn't speak to anyone."

"Police officers are frequently depressed because of horrors they see on the job. Do we really want to be in a position that LEOs [law enforcement officers] don't want to talk about what they see on the job because they can lose their jobs and their guns as a result? This is like 'Minority Report' without the psychics," Lott said, referring to the Hollywood movie about a system in which the government enforces "pre-crime."

"The president focuses on mental illness, but ERPOs [Extreme Risk Protection Orders] don't focus on mental illness," Lott said. "The big thing here is to predict who's going to commit crime. Criminal history. Male. Age," Lott said. "In the past, you've had to have a criminal record for courts to remove your gun rights. Red flag laws stop rights with merely a complaint."

Kris Kobach, a Kansas U.S. Senate candidate and close informal adviser to Trump, told The Epoch Times that "red flag laws that have been passed at the state level deny due process in multiple ways to the targets of individual gun confiscation complaints."

Kobach said that under many existing red flag state laws, any person who has lived in a target's house—including ex-girlfriends or boyfriends—can be considered a family member for purposes of lodging gun confiscation complaints.

"The standard of proof is very low. They have a hearing where they seize the person's guns right away without even being told," Kobach said. "The standard for disarming the individual is very low, it's not a beyond reasonable doubt standard."

Kobach said that "reckless storage of a firearm" could be used to disarm people who sleep with their guns near their beds. He noted that while it's not impossible for Congress to pass a red flag bill that avoids due process concerns, the state laws on the books "are not good."

Kobach said he hasn't yet spoken to Trump on this issue, but if given the opportunity, would advise the president on the potential danger of a federal red flag bill.

ZACH GIBSON/GETTY IMAGES



Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) on Capitol Hill on June 13, 2017.

ALEX MONROE/GETTY IMAGES



Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) on Capitol Hill on June 27, 2019.

President Comforts Victims in Dayton and El Paso, Thanks First Responders

IVAN PENTCHOUKOV

President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump visited Dayton, Ohio, and El Paso, Texas, on Aug. 7 to meet with the victims of the two mass shootings that days earlier had claimed the lives of 32 people and thank first responders for their efforts.

The president and first lady visited hospitals in both cities and met with victims and families, medical staff, and law enforcement officers. The press was barred from both events, because the trip was about meeting with victims and wasn't meant to be a photo-op, according to White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham.

In Dayton, Trump visited the Miami Valley Hospital, which is a five-minute drive from the Ned Peppers bar, where a gunman killed 10 people and injured 27 on Aug. 4.

The Trumps walked from room to room at the hospital, speaking with victims, families of survivors, first responders, and hospital staff.

"You had God watching, I want you to know we're with you all the way," the president told one group.

Photos and videos distributed by the White House show the president holding hands with victims, speaking with hospital executives, and posing for photos with uniformed law enforcement officers.

"They've been stopping between rooms to thank the hardworking medical staff. Very powerful moments for all!" Grisham wrote on Twitter.

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), who joined the president for the hospital visit, told reporters that Trump was "well-received." People who had injuries but were no longer hospitalized were also in attendance, because Trump had asked to see all the victims.

"It was emotional, of course, but it was also inspiring in the sense that again they're doing better, and the attitude of the three individuals who were the most seriously wounded who are still there was positive," Portman said. "They were all very optimistic about their recovery and that was heartening to see."

Portman said President Trump also spent time with the officers who responded to the shooting.

"We talked about their training and he commended them for their remarkable response," Portman said. "It was a terrible night, but it could have been so much worse had they not responded quickly."

Miami Valley Hospital received 16 victims of the shooting, of whom five were admitted, one in critical condition.

The president landed in Ohio shortly before 11 a.m. A small welcoming party, including Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine and Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley, shook hands and exchanged words with the first couple on the tarmac at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio) was also part of the greeting party. Turner's daughter, Jessica, joined him. She was in Dayton when the shooting happened.

After visiting Dayton, Trump flew to El Paso, where a gunman took the lives of 22 people, just 13 hours before the shooting in Dayton.

The president landed in Texas before 3 p.m. local time, and was greeted by Gov. Greg Abbott, Sens. Ted Cruz and John Cornyn, and El Paso Mayor Dee Margo.

The group traveled via motorcade to the



2

University Medical Center of El Paso, which received 13 of the victims of the shooting at a local Walmart. At the hospital, the president met with victims, families, hospital staff, and police officers.

Prior to his departure, Trump told reporters at the White House "we're going to take the opportunity to really congratulate the first responders."

"It's a terrific opportunity really to congratulate some of the police and law enforcement," Trump said. "The job they've done was incredible. Really incredible."

On Aug. 4, Trump harshly condemned both massacres, proposed measures to prevent future attacks, and urged Americans to unite against the ideologies espoused by the killers. The Dayton killer reportedly was a follower of socialism, Satanism, and the extremist group Antifa.

Asked if he is concerned about the rise of hate groups, Trump concurred and noted that he plans to take action.

The president told reporters at the White House prior to his departure that there is interest in Congress for legislation related to background checks for gun purchases. Responding to a question about banning assault weapons, he noted that the "political appetite" for such legislation is lacking. Trump signaled that he may bring Congress back from recess to vote on a bill, if there is enough support for the measure.

"There's a great appetite, and I mean a very strong appetite, for background checks," the president added. "I think both Republicans and Democrats are getting close to a bill on—they're doing something on background checks."

Within hours of the shootings, Democrats and establishment media personalities claimed, without evidence, that Trump's rhetoric caused the killers to carry out the massacres.

"No, I don't think my rhetoric has at all," Trump said. "I think my rhetoric brings people together."

Some of the president's critics used out-of-context fragments of his comments on illegal immigration to allege that the president was inciting hatred and terrorism. The president has likened the mass of illegal crossings on the southwest border to an "invasion." One of the definitions of "invasion" is "infringement by intrusion."

"I think illegal immigration is a terrible thing for this country. I think you have to come in legally. Ideally, you have to come in through merit," Trump said. "We need people coming in because we have many companies coming into our country. They're pouring in."

"We need strong immigration laws. But we want to allow millions of people to come in because we need them. We have companies coming in from Japan, all over Europe, all over Asia. They're opening up companies

(1) President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump visit a shooting victim and her family members at the University Medical Center of El Paso in El Paso, Texas, on Aug. 7, 2019.

(2-4) President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump meet with survivors, families, hospital staff, and first responders at Miami Valley Hospital in Dayton, Ohio, on Aug. 7, 2019.



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here. They need people to work. We have a very low unemployment rate," he added. "I think we need legal immigration, not illegal immigration."

Trump called the Democrats who have exploited the shootings to criticize him "political people."

"My critics are political people. They're trying to make points," Trump said. "In many cases, they're running for president and they're very low in the polls."

"So these are people that are looking for political gain. I don't think they're getting it. And, as much as possible, I've tried to stay out of that," he added.

The president noted that the alleged Day-

ton killer, Connor Betts, supported self-described socialist Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.). The suspect in the El Paso killings, Patrick Wood Crusius, espoused racist views in his manifesto.

Asked if he is concerned about the rise of hate groups, Trump concurred and noted that he plans to take action.

"I am concerned about the rise of any group of hate. I don't like it," Trump said. "Any group of hate—whether it's white supremacy, whether it's any other kind of supremacy, whether it's Antifa, whether it's any group of hate—I am very concerned about it. And I'll do something about it."

Google Will 'Actively Interfere' in 2020 Elections, Researcher Says

DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES



A woman looks at her smartphone as she walks past the Google New York office in New York on June 3, 2019.

BOWEN XIAO

A researcher who has spent more than half a decade monitoring Google's influence said he believes the tech giant will "actively interfere" in the 2020 elections. On Aug. 6, President Donald Trump said his administration is watching Google "very closely."

Dr. Robert Epstein, senior research psychologist at the American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology, told The Epoch Times that Google has access to a number of powerful manipulation methods mostly through "ephemeral experiences" that can shift votes.

Online ephemeral experiences are brief moments where information is generated instantaneously, such as search suggestions. They are not stored anywhere and can't be tracked. Leaked internal emails from Google in 2018 found employees specifically discussing launching "ephemeral experiences" to counter Trump's then-travel ban, The Wall Street Journal reported.

In the U.S., there are no regulations, no laws restricting their ability to manipulate opinions or votes.

Robert Epstein, senior research psychologist, American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology

In his congressional testimony in July, Epstein noted that if all major technology companies came together to support the same candidate in 2020—which he said was likely—they could shift 15 million votes without leaving a paper trail.

Epstein has discovered a dozen methods Google uses to manipulate public opinion or votes, including search engine manipulation effect and search suggestion effects. "Google will actively interfere in the 2020 elections," Epstein said. "They'll actively interfere in their lobbying efforts, they'll actively interfere with their political donations, and they'll actively interfere using the online methods of manipulation that I've studied and probably other methods that I haven't yet discovered."

Alphabet, the parent company of Google, donated \$4.7 million to Democratic congressional candidates in 2018, according to FEC records. To Republican candidates, it donated \$754,911.

In 2016, Epstein conducted a secret monitoring project that showed Google hid negative auto-complete search results for Hillary Clinton months before the election. His peer-reviewed research found Google's algorithms can easily shift 20 percent or more of votes among voters and to 80 percent in some demographic groups.

In a more recent study, Epstein analyzed Google's "Go Vote" reminder on Election Day 2018

and found it gave the Democratic party between 800,000 and 4.6 million more votes than it gave Republicans. He used the same calculations Google's data analysts performed before they added the prompt. Epstein characterized it as "vote manipulation," not a public service.

Epstein, who considers himself a moderate who leans liberal, said his chief concern was Google's power to not only suppress content but also determine the order it appears in—also known as filtering and ordering.

"These two processes put in the hands of a very small number of business executives are extremely dangerous to humanity," he said. "They are a danger to democracy, they undermine a fair and free election."

Conservatives have long decried what they described as unfair treatment from major technology companies. "Shadowbanning"—the surreptitious suppression of a user's content by social media platforms, is also often pointed to.

Google's manipulation tactics, Epstein said, are legal and save the company money when compared to using other methods of influence, such as donations.

"Google can do whatever they want," he said. "In the U.S., there are no regulations, no laws restricting their ability to manipulate opinions or votes. By favoring one candidate or cause in search results or search suggestions, it costs Google—nothing."

Google can still be fined. In March, the company was hit with its third antitrust penalty, a \$1.7 billion fine by the European Union. In 2017, it was fined \$2.7 billion for giving its own shopping service a more prominent placement than others.

What Google does with these methods is new and not like billboards or television advertisements, Epstein said.

"There's no way to fight them, there's no way to counteract them. They are not competitive. That's a kind of power that has never existed before in human history. It's perfectly legal for these companies to use these techniques," he said. "It costs them little to nothing to use them, so of course they will."

To prevent Google from interfering in the 2020 elections, Epstein said one solution would be to set up a large-scale monitoring system utilizing artificial intelligence to "catch these companies in the act." He described Google as a "mind-control machine."

U.S. authorities are considering the idea that the company has an antitrust issue. Google controls about 92 percent of the internet search market.

A Google spokesman, in response to reports of election interference, told The Epoch Times in a previous email that they "go to great lengths to build our products and enforce our policies in ways that don't take political leanings into account."

Anonymous sources told Politico on Aug. 7 that the White House is circulating drafts of a proposed executive order meant to address anti-conservative bias from social media companies.

White House Mulls Protection for Venezuelans in the US, but Shy About Anything Hard to Undo

CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON

WASHINGTON—As the United States tightens the economic screws on Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro, the administration is figuring out what to do with the Venezuelan nonimmigrants in this country.

Lawmakers, the majority Democrats, are pushing for Venezuelans to be granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS), a designation that would protect those already in the United States from deportation and provide work authorization.

The status is granted to foreign nationals by the secretary of Homeland Security for such issues as an ongoing armed conflict (such as civil war), an environmental disaster (such as an earthquake or hurricane), an epidemic, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions.

About 270,000 Venezuelans currently in the United States would potentially be eligible for the status, including 123,000 who are illegally present, according to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Immigration Statistics.

But the administration and most Republicans are reluctant to back the legislation, with many saying history has shown there's nothing temporary about the status. President Donald Trump has tried to end TPS for six countries in the past year or so, but has been blocked by a federal judge each time.

Currently, citizens from 10 countries have TPS: Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti, Nepal, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

Some countries have held the designation for longer than 20 years, including Sudan, which was designated in 1997, Somalia, which first gained TPS status in 1991, and Nicaragua, which was designated in 1999.

"There are few things more permanent, though, than Temporary Protected Status," Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) said at an event hosted by the Center for Immigration Studies on July 31.

"We have foreign nationals living in our country today who got TPS protection 10 or 20 years ago while there was a civil war going on in their country, and the war has been settled for over 10 years."

Cotton said the current situation in Venezuela under Maduro is exactly the reason the program was created—for those living in the United States legally, who are not eligible for visa renewal, but can't return to their home country safely.

"I think most Americans recognize that's a sensible, sound policy, in principle," Cotton said. But, he said, it doesn't work if it's impossible to rescind.

"The bureaucracies of both parties for decades have been unwill-



A man waves the Venezuelan flag in front of the Capitol building in Washington on March 7, 2019.

I think it's unwise for us to extend more TPS protection to other countries when we can't even withdraw it from countries who have it now.

Sen. Tom Cotton

People walk in the Petare neighborhood after Caracas and other parts of Venezuela were hit by a massive power cut on July 22, 2019.



MATIAS DELACROIX/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ing to rescind TPS status when it should be rescinded," he said. "Now that President Trump finally has done so, you have left-wing judges basically practicing a form of resistance law that is not letting the president withdraw TPS status, which is his prerogative under federal law. So I think it's unwise for us to extend more TPS protection to other countries when we can't even withdraw it from countries who have it now."

In January, the Department of Homeland Security announced an end to TPS for about 200,000 nonimmigrant Salvadorans. Then-Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen determined that the original conditions for granting TPS to Salvadorans in 2001—the aftermath of a series of earthquakes that killed 1,000 people and destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes—no longer exist. The move was met with court action and TPS remains active for Salvadorans.

In 2018, the administration tried to rescind TPS designations for five other countries—Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, Nepal, and Sudan—but was blocked by judges each time. TPS will continue for those countries while the cases make their way through the appeals process. Beyond that, Democrats have introduced legislation that would give amnesty and a pathway to citizenship for all current TPS holders—about 417,000 foreign nationals currently have TPS.

Venezuela TPS Bill

The House passed a bill supporting TPS for Venezuelans on July 25, but it fell flat on the Senate floor on July 30.

"How can you say you care for the people of Venezuela, yet when it comes to those in the United States, force them to return to this circumstance?" Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said at the time.

Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.)

called it an "unconscionable moral failing" for the Senate not to approve the legislation.

Menendez introduced the Senate's version of the bill in February, but it hasn't gone anywhere.

The administration has said it would veto the current bills, should they make it to the president's desk.

Cotton said he'd be happy to take another look at the legislation if the Democrats were to include a measure that allows a president, via the Department of Homeland Security, to rescind TPS without court interference. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), who co-sponsored the Senate bill, said he's working with the administration to find a solution.

"We've made progress," Rubio said in a Twitter video on July 31. "We have a few more hurdles to climb and to clear, but I think, hopefully, fingers crossed, we're going to have some good news soon from the administration on this."

Venezuela's ambassador to the United States, Carlos Vecchio, said he is lobbying for U.S.-based Venezuelans to be protected from deportation.

"We have been working with the Trump administration and working with the Congress on how we can find a solution in that matter," Vecchio said on July 30.

A spokesperson from Homeland Security said a TPS designation for Venezuelans isn't appropriate at this time.

"First, the Department of State generally provides the Secretary of Homeland Security input on country conditions that may or

may not warrant such a designation, and [the State Department] has not conducted an assessment of country conditions in Venezuela that demonstrate the propriety of a designation," the spokesperson said.

"Furthermore, the Venezuela crisis is already being addressed regionally, in part, by the UN-HCR's Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan."

Although the 270,000 nonimmigrant Venezuelans in the United States don't have an officially protected status yet, the near-impossibility for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to deport them gives them something of a safety net.

"ICE reports that its ability to remove Venezuelan nationals has been 'severely impacted' by current conditions in Venezuela," the Homeland Security spokesperson said. "All commercial flights to Venezuela from the United States—which ICE relies on for removals—have been suspended due to security concerns and financial issues."

Deferred Enforced Departure

Another solution being considered is the little-used Deferred Enforced Departure. The designation is made at the president's discretion, and although it's not a specific immigration status, individuals are

not subject to removal, usually for a designated period of time. Work authorization may also be given.

Rubio's office confirmed on Aug. 6 that Deferred Enforced Departure is another option on the table for the administration.

Currently, only Liberians have such status, which was designated in 2007 by President George W. Bush. It has currently been extended to March 30, 2020.



Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) in Washington on July 30, 2019.



Carlos Vecchio, Venezuela's ambassador to the United States, at the National Press Club in Washington on July 30, 2019.

Children at Center of Booming Smuggling Industry

CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON

WASHINGTON—A 33-year-old Honduran male illegally crossed the U.S. border with his 15-year-old "son" recently.

After an investigation, it was discovered that the man had borrowed the boy from the boy's mother in Honduras to use in an attempt to be released into the United States quickly as a family unit. He presented a fake birth certificate for the boy.

Border Patrol and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) agents are uncovering thousands of such stories as smugglers and illegal aliens learn that a child is an adult's ticket into the United States, due to legal loopholes.

In this case, the child didn't have any family in the United States, and the man told agents he had planned to drop the boy off with an unknown male in Nebraska. "He also stated that smuggling fees are considerably less expensive when adults are traveling with a child," according to case notes obtained by The Epoch Times. The man confessed when he was faced with a DNA test. He was charged with alien smuggling.

"By requiring the release of family units before the conclusion of immigration proceedings, seemingly well-intentioned court rulings and legislation are being exploited by transnational criminal organizations and human smugglers," Matthew Albence, acting director for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said in a congressional hearing on July 25.

"These despicable smugglers have created an entire illicit industry with untold millions of dollars being made through the sale, rental, and recycling of children—utilized by unscrupulous adults to pose as family units."

HSI, a division of ICE, has sent 4,000 agents to help Border Patrol investigate fake families entering along the southern border.

Since mid-April when the HSI agents were deployed, more than 5,800 fake families have been discovered, according to Kevin McAleenan, acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Almost 15 percent of all family units that Border Patrol agents refer to HSI have been found to be fraudulent.

In separate cases, two Guatemalan men claimed to be traveling with their teenage sons when apprehended by Border Patrol in Santa Teresa, New Mexico.

Both men subsequently admitted to HSI agents that the smuggling organization had provided them with the children—one was 15 and the other was 16 years. Both men were charged and convicted with illegal re-entry.

Another recent case found that Guatemalan man Francisco Paredes-Garcia used a fake birth certificate to try to convince border agents that a 17-year-old boy was his son.

During a subsequent interview with HSI agents, Paredes-Garcia admitted the child wasn't his, and instead had only known him for a short time.

He told agents the child's real father had "gifted" the child to him in order to claim



CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES

to be a family unit.

"Paredes-Garcia stated he knew the birth certificate contained false information and still used it, because he knew it was the only way he could make entry into the United States," the HSI case file states. Paredes-Garcia was charged and convicted of making false statements.

A Honduran man, 24, told border agents that he was traveling with his 6-month-old son and presented them with a counterfeit Honduran birth certificate. A subsequent DNA test revealed the two were not related, and the man admitted the child belonged to his girlfriend, who remained in Honduras.

HSI said the man had recently attempted to enter the United States with the child on two separate occasions but was returned to Mexico to await his immigration hearing. The man was charged with alien smuggling.

In cases such as these, most children are sent back to their families in their home countries, according to ICE. Some are also connected with family members in the United States.

The number of individuals within family units who Border Patrol has apprehended along the southern border so far this fiscal year reached more than 390,000 by the end of June. Another 37,500 presented at ports of entry without legal documentation. Averaged out, that's close to 1,600 per day since Oct. 1, 2018.

Only 14 percent of family units asserted a credible fear claim after crossing the border illegally in fiscal year 2018, according to

Customs and Border Protection data. Border Patrol is so overwhelmed that they often release families into the United States within hours of apprehension, even if they don't make a credible fear claim.

All families are released with a Notice to Appear in immigration court, but the vast majority don't show up.

Of almost 17,000 asylum cases for family units completed since Sept. 24, 2018, only 142 were granted asylum relief by an immigration judge—less than 1 percent. Most (13,500) were ordered removed after failing to show up at their court hearing, according to data from the Justice Department. The statistics are from 10 major immigration courts around the country, including Houston, New York, Los Angeles, Miami, and Atlanta.

The immigration court backlog currently sits at more than 900,000 cases.

Child Imposters

A new trend that agents are uncovering more frequently is that of child imposters—especially single adult males using false birth certificates to pass as unaccompanied minors.

Unaccompanied minors are generally transferred from Border Patrol custody to Health and Human Services within 72 hours, giving agents a short window to discover fraud.

HSI recently encountered a 23-year-old Honduran male who claimed, with a fake birth certificate, to be 17 when apprehended by Border Patrol. Since mid-April, HSI agents have discovered 71 such child imposters; 70 of whom have been accepted for prosecution.

More than 67,000 unaccompanied children have crossed the southern border since Oct. 1, 2018. Most are from Central America, and they spend around 45 days in Health and Human Services custody before being released to a sponsor within the United States—in most cases (79 percent) to an adult who is in the country illegally.

"The increase in flow of illegal migrants and the change in those arriving at our border are putting the migrants, particularly young children, at risk of harm from smugglers, traffickers, criminals, and the dangers of the difficult journey," Albence said.

Acting ICE Director Matthew Albence testifies in front of the House Appropriations Committee on Capitol Hill on July 25, 2019.



CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES

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TRUTH and TRADITION

A NEWSPAPER ABRAHAM LINCOLN WOULD READ

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Europe Agrees to Buy More US Beef

EMEL AKAN

WASHINGTON—The United States and the European Union reached an agreement that will open Europe to more American beef exports, ending a long-running trans-Atlantic dispute.

As part of the ongoing trade talks between Washington and Brussels, President Donald Trump announced on Aug. 2 that a “break-through agreement” was struck that would lower trade barriers in Europe and expand access for U.S. beef ranchers. The duty-free beef exports to the bloc would rise by 46 percent in the first year and by another 90 percent over seven years, he said.

“This is a tremendous victory for American farmers, ranchers, and of course European consumers because American beef is considered the best in the world,” he said during the signing ceremony of the agreement at the White House.

The beef accord was signed by EU Ambassador to the United States Stavros Lambrinidis, Representative of the Presidency of the Council of the EU Jani Raappana, and U.S.

This is a tremendous victory for American farmers, ranchers, and of course European consumers because American beef is considered the best in the world.

President Donald Trump

Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. The agreement will gradually raise the amount of American hormone-free beef that can be sold in the European market.

The EU has an import quota for beef, which allows the bloc to import overall 45,000 tons every year. According to the new agreement, U.S. exporters will eventually get the lion's share—almost 80 percent or 35,000 metric tons—of the overall beef allowed into the EU.

The agreement will be phased in over seven years, with an initial allocation of nearly 40 percent for U.S. beef, according to the earlier announcement by EU officials.

In total, yearly beef exports to the bloc will rise to \$420 million from \$150 million, over seven years.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Raappana said that “a very substantial amount of existing quota will be ring-fenced” for the United States.

“This provides a solution to our long-standing dispute in the WTO,” he added.

The beef accord is an important step in the trade negotiations between Washington and Brussels, according to Bart Oosterveld, di-

rector of the global business and economics program at the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based think tank.

“The agreement restores an old quota of U.S. exports of beef to the EU that had been talked about under the Obama administration,” he said.

Under a compromise reached in 2009, the EU established an import quota for foreign beef, including that from the United States. U.S. farmers initially dominated the quota.

However, other producers such as Argentina, Australia, and Uruguay gradually increased their exports to the bloc, pushing the U.S. share down to 30 percent.

This prompted the Obama administration to threaten the EU with customs penalties. The new agreement is now ending the long-running dispute with Brussels.

The bloc convinced other beef exporters Australia, Argentina, and Uruguay to cede a large share of the import quota, so that U.S. exporters can get more access to the EU market.

US–EU Trade Talks

The beef deal comes a year after the United States and the EU reached an agreement to eliminate tariffs on industrial goods.

In July last year, Trump and European Commission's then-President Jean-Claude Juncker agreed to work together toward zero tariffs, zero non-tariff barriers, and zero subsidies on all industrial goods other than cars. There have been several rounds of trade talks between

Lighthizer and outgoing EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström in recent months.

Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross told reporters in June that the talks with the EU were going very slowly, adding that reaching a trade deal would take a while.

“It's far more complex than negotiating with China or than negotiating with Canada or with Mexico,” he said.

A critical difference between the negotiating mandates of both sides is agriculture. The EU's mandate considers removing tariffs and non-tariff barriers on industrial goods only, while Washington's objective includes agricultural products.

Beef is classified on both sides of the Atlantic as an agricultural commodity and, hence, the beef deal needs to be approved by the European Parliament.

“The agreement will be announced to the European Parliament, and we hope to obtain soon—obtain the consent as soon as possible,” Raappana said.

According to Oosterveld, the beef accord is “silver lining” and shows that “there's an active dialogue” between Washington and Brussels.

There are a lot of tensions in the trans-Atlantic trade dialogue, including the threat of the car tariffs and the ongoing Boeing-Airbus disputes, he said.

“But apparently those aren't enough to hold progress on certain topics entirely. So that's positive,” he said. “There appears to be robust dialogue and an ability to reach an [trade] agreement.”



Cows on a farm-land in Wilson County, Tenn., on Jan. 10, 2018.



Deputy Head of Mission for the Finnish presidency of the Council of the EU Jani Raappana, President Donald Trump, EU Ambassador to the United States Stavros Lambrinidis (Seated L), and Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer (Seated R) are joined by representatives of the U.S. beef industry after signing a trade deal at the White House on Aug. 2, 2019.

Courts Strike Down Trump Administration Rule Limiting Asylum

MATTHEW VADUM

One federal judge struck down President Donald Trump's Proclamation 9822, which limits asylum claims to those entering the United States at an officially designated port of entry, as another federal judge issued a national injunction preventing the rule's application.

The policy was aimed at curbing the flow of Central American migrants coming to the United States, many in international caravans through Mexico.

Proclamation 9822, signed by the president on Nov. 9, 2018, declares that any asylum seekers trying to enter the United States must do so at a legal port of entry in order to have their asylum claims processed. Those entering illegally won't be processed, according to the document.

“The continuing and threatened mass migration of aliens with no basis for admission into the United States through our southern border has precipitated a crisis and undermines the integrity of our borders,” Trump stated in the proclamation.

“I therefore must take immediate action to protect the national interest, and to maintain the effectiveness of the asylum system for legitimate asylum seekers who demonstrate that they have fled persecution and warrant the many special benefits associated with asylum.”

But U.S. District Judge Randolph D. Moss of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, appointed in 2014 by then-President Barack Obama, found in a 77-page decision on Aug. 2 that Trump's proclamation both runs afoul of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) and is “inconsistent with” the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

Moss quoted the INA: “any alien who is physically present in the United States or who arrives in the United States (whether or not at a designated port of arrival...), irrespective of such alien's status, may apply for asylum.”

The Trump administration argued unsuccessfully that the policy doesn't hinder ac-

Border Patrol agents apprehend seven illegal immigrants from China, one from Mexico, and one from El Salvador after they tried to evade capture after crossing the Rio Grande from Mexico into the United States near McAllen, Texas, on April 18, 2019.



tion by would-be asylees who enter the U.S. outside a legal port of entry, but took the position such individuals were ineligible to seek asylum in the first place.

Judge Moss disagreed.

“As a matter of common usage, no one would draw a meaningful distinction, for example, between a rule providing that children may not apply for a driver's license and one providing that children are not eligible to receive a driver's license,” he wrote. “Both locutions mean the same thing.”

The successful plaintiffs were represented by the Washington-based Hogan Lovells, Williams & Connolly, as well as the New York-based Human Rights First and the Chicago-based National Immigrant Justice Center.

Moss refused a request by plaintiffs to issue a nationwide so-called universal injunction preventing the government from enforcing the rule. His decision holds only in the jurisdiction of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Asylum policy has been the subject of a raft of recent rulings by federal judges.

In the last few days, another federal judge also declined to issue a nationwide injunction against the rule, while a different federal judge moved forward with precisely such an injunction.

The APA, which is Public Law 79-404, governs how federal agencies propose and establish regulations and gives federal courts oversight over agency actions. The statute

serves as a kind of “constitution” for U.S. administrative law, according to legal scholars.

“Fortunately, the court need not engage in such logistical gymnastics because the language of the APA and the controlling D.C. Circuit precedent are unambiguous,” Moss wrote in his order. “The Court...concludes that the proper remedy is to set the rule aside.”

Judge Jon Tigar of the Northern District of California, also an Obama appointee, found on July 24 that the rule was “inconsistent with the existing asylum laws” approved by Congress, and he issued an injunction preventing the administration from acting on the rule.

The same day, Moss's colleague, U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly of the District of Columbia, a Trump appointee, denied a request for a temporary restraining order against the rule dealing with asylum policy.

Moss's ruling came after U.S. Attorney General William Barr ordered July 29 that individuals who claim they fear persecution in their home countries because of threats to their family members will no longer be eligible for asylum in this country. An asylum-seeker is required to demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a specific social group.

Barr overturned a decision by the Board of Immigration Appeals that held that a Mexican man's family was a recognizable social group.

It's Long Past Time for National Discussion About Mental Illness

BRIAN CATES



Commentary

After two horrific mass shooting incidents last weekend, the United States is once again locked into the same frustrating routine that follows such tragedies.

In El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, deeply disturbed individuals shot and killed more than 30 people in two separate events.

Many Democratic politicians running for president immediately began using the incidents in their fundraising, calling for gun bans and more gun control laws, such as bringing back the lapsed “assault weapons ban.”

President Donald Trump took a far different approach when he stated that it's time to begin grappling with mental health reform, and I think he's right.

Trump outlined five steps he intends to take in response to these latest mass slayings.

1. Set up partnerships between the Department of Justice, local state and federal agencies, and social media companies to identify and act on early warning signs of someone threatening a mass shooting.
2. Stop the glorification of violence in our society, which includes video games and other forms of mass entertainment where the act of killing is celebrated in a “culture of violence.”
3. Reform the mental health laws to more accurately identify mentally disturbed individuals who may commit acts of violence to ensure they get treatment when necessary, they must be involuntarily confined.
4. Ensure that people judged to be a risk to

public safety have their access to firearms taken away by due process.

5. Quickly and decisively administer capital punishment for those who commit mass slayings, without yearslong delays. Trump acknowledged some of these proposed steps will be very hard to achieve, such as the second one, which calls for a cultural change. Trump himself said: “Cultural change is hard. But each of us can choose to build a culture that celebrates the inherent worth and dignity of every human life. That's what we have to do.”

The third step will also be a very uphill battle. That's because we haven't had a realistic program for dealing with the mentally ill in this country for a very long time.

And besides the mass shooting incidents, the ever-increasing problem of mentally ill homeless people on our streets demonstrates how the U.S. government, at the local, state, and federal levels, have failed the mentally ill among us.

I have been saying for years now, there needs to be a real national discussion about mental illness, and I'm encouraged that the president is willing to play a role in helping to start this discussion.

However, I noticed there was immediate and very strong pushback from people on social media to the president's proposal to institute new “red flag” laws.

Paranoia Isn't a Good Reason to Maintain Status Quo

It's very understandable that many people who don't trust the government to do anything right are made extremely uneasy when a discussion about mental health reform begins.

Objections to mental health reform often seem to be raised by those who fear

Attendees comfort each other during a vigil for victims of a mass shooting in El Paso, Texas, on Aug. 3, 2019.

It's simply not an option to maintain the status quo of allowing clearly disturbed people to roam around free just because some people are paranoid that they'll wake up someday in the future and the United States will have morphed into the Soviet Union 2.0.



they will end up having the apparatus of the State turned on them. These people are afraid that those who decide what is and what is not mental illness will turn any new mental health laws into a weapon they will use on their political opponents.

It's indeed true that in the old Soviet Union, perfectly sane people were imprisoned in mental hospitals for publicly expressing beliefs that contravened accepted Soviet doctrine. This happened to many Christians, who were confined while doctors attempted to “cure” them of their supposedly absurd belief in God.

But is the United States in any real danger of becoming the Soviet Union 2.0? Is paranoia that one day, someday, people might abuse red flag laws to lock up innocent people a reason to continue doing what we've been doing, which clearly isn't working? I don't think so.



Two men light candles at a makeshift memorial during a candle vigil in honor of those who lost their lives or were wounded in a shooting in Dayton, Ohio, on Aug. 4, 2019.

AP PHOTO/JOHN LOCHER

MEGAN JELINGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

It's simply not an option to maintain the status quo of allowing clearly disturbed people to roam around free on our streets or even in our schools just because some people are paranoid that they'll wake up someday in the future and the United States will have morphed into the Soviet Union 2.0.

When Your System Fails, Blame the NRA!

In his remarks on Aug. 5, the president mentioned the tragic Parkland school shooting that occurred in February 2018 as an example of how current systems fail to detect and act on early warning signs:

“As an example, the monster in the Parkland high school in Florida had many red flags against him. And yet nobody took decisive action. Nobody did anything. Why not?”

That shooting was carried out by a person for whom the police had been called to come to deal with his increasingly violent and irrational behavior at least 39 times.

And yet, on the day he carried out this massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, this person was still allowed to come onto the campus.

Andrew Pollack, whose daughter Meadow was one of the many victims that awful day, has a new book coming out soon, in which he lays out in awful detail why Parkland was the most avoidable mass murder ever. And if you've studied the facts of this case, it's hard to argue with him about that.

“Why Meadow Died” is an in-depth look at the incompetent and ineffective school safety policies that ended up being completely unable to keep a truly dangerous person separated from the other students.

If your school safety policies fail to keep kids safe, then all the rest of your bright ideas aren't worth much, since you've failed at your main job.

And in the aftermath of Parkland, none of the people who played a direct hand in creating that dysfunctional school safety system in Broward County would take any responsibility for what they allowed

to happen. Instead, the authorities in Broward were too busy offering up scapegoats to take their place.

And the chief poster boy for that is Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel, who took the opportunity of that now-infamous CNN town hall to stridently deny any responsibility.

The entire country got to watch the former sheriff relentlessly shift the focus off himself and his department by stubbornly insisting the massacre was the fault of Dana Loesch and the National Rifle Association (NRA).

Instead of blaming the people that put ineffective policies in place that resulted in a failing system that ended up being unable to keep a dangerous person out of the school, the audience was encouraged to engage in a “Two Minutes Hate” against the NRA as if straight out of George Orwell's “1984.”

It's far past time for public officials who can't protect the public from dangerous people to quit being allowed to proffer the NRA and guns as substitute targets instead of their own incompetence and failed policies in addressing and dealing with mentally ill people who are clearly already violent or threatening to become so.

In the wake of the El Paso and Dayton tragedies, CNN now wants to hold another town hall, which was scheduled to air on Aug. 7.

Much to Jake Tapper's surprise, it appears that no Republican, conservative, or NRA supporter will agree to appear at this CNN town hall to play the role of the designated villains this time.

Imagine my shock at that.

Brian Cates is a writer based in South Texas and author of “Nobody Asked For My Opinion ... But Here It Is Anyway!” He can be reached on Twitter @drawand-strike.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

AMERICAN THOUGHT LEADERS

Heather Mac Donald on the Toxic Ideology of Identity Politics



SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

IRENE LUO & JAN JEKIELEK

“The charge of racism today is basically tantamount to saying: ‘I have nothing. I can’t make an argument.’ It is the all-purpose response to try to shut down evidence that you don’t like,” Heather Mac Donald said in an interview with The Epoch Times for the “American Thought Leaders” program. Mac Donald is a Thomas W. Smith fellow of the Manhattan Institute and a contributing editor at the institute’s City Journal.

Mac Donald said President Donald Trump was “absolutely correct” in claiming Baltimore is a failed city. Trump was recently denounced as racist after he criticized Democratic Rep. Elijah Cummings, the chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, and described Cummings’s Baltimore district as a “disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess” that is a “very dangerous & filthy place.”

But Mac Donald argued the president’s claims were rooted in facts. “The people themselves in Baltimore admit they’ve not been able to get a handle on the crime problem,” she said.

Baltimore has the highest murder rate of any major metropolitan area in the nation, with 56 homicides for every 100,000 people. “You have these insane drive-by shootings. They’re taking lives by the weekend,” Mac Donald said.

“They’re at their highest per capita homicide rate in their history, thanks to something which I’ve called the Ferguson effect. The cops are unwilling to get out of their cars and question somebody hanging out at a known drug corner at 2 a.m. because they’re so fearful of another riot happening if they’re forced to use force to subdue a suspect.

“So they’re de-policing, and crime is through the roof. And the good people in Baltimore, those good, hardworking minority residents that have businesses, they’re all begging for the police to step up to the plate.

“The press doesn’t [care]. The only time the press cares about black lives is if one has been taken by a police officer, which is a minute fraction of the black homicide toll.”

In the United States, black people are 10 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than white people. And black children and teenagers are 14 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than white children and teenagers of the same age, according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

“In 2016, in Chicago, there were 4,300 people shot. That’s one person every two hours. Twenty-four children under the age of 12 were shot in Chicago that year. Now, let’s imagine 4,300 white people being shot in Chicago. It is unthinkable. There would be a national revolution,” Mac Donald said.

“It’s completely unacceptable. Nobody knows about this toll in Chicago because the victims were black, and the perpetrators were black. We’re all told that it’s the police who are the biggest threats to black people. That year in Chicago, the police shot 20 people, virtually all armed and dangerous, threatening either the officer or civil-

▲ A man sleeps on a bench in downtown in Baltimore, Md., on July 28, 2019.

You have a culture now that has decided to be so against itself, to hate its own accomplishments. The only analogy I can think of is the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

Heather Mac Donald, fellow, Manhattan Institute

▶ Manhattan Institute fellow Heather Mac Donald, author of “The Diversity Delusion,” in Irvine, Calif., on July 28, 2019.

ians. That’s 0.5 percent of the total.”

While some would argue TV shows and mass media don’t report on black homicides because white viewers in America wouldn’t care, Mac Donald argued that the reality “is that the black leaders don’t care either.”

“They should be screaming bloody murder. But we see what’s happening now with the Trump tweet about Baltimore. Everybody is running in circles frantically to try to deny this reality,” she said.

While liberals will blame many of the issues plaguing black Americans on racism, Mac Donald said, there are cultural and behavioral explanations for the socioeconomic divide and the rampant levels of crime in inner cities.

“The crux of the problem is the breakdown of the traditional family,” she said. “When you have, tragically, an out-of-wedlock birth rate in the black community of 73 percent, that means that 73 percent of black children are being raised by single mothers. That is a social catastrophe of a civilization-crushing magnitude.”

And there are other behavioral choices, she argued, like “not going to school, being truant, not studying, not taking your textbooks home, not paying attention to your teacher, getting involved in gangs—those are vast behavioral disparities.”

Liberals fundamentally reject discussion on individual behavior and responsibility and are only willing to accept structural explanations for disparities, Mac Donald said. In their view, “society is structured in such a way that it is impossible for people in official victim groups to succeed,” she said. Socioeconomic disparities, according to liberals, are “by definition, a result of a panoply of bigotry, the primary one being race-based bigotry.”

But racism isn’t the villain in this story, in Mac Donald’s view. “The answers have got to be in culture change and behavior change. People have to start making different decisions about how they lead their lives.”

The Assault on Meritocracy

In Mac Donald’s view, racism was indeed a brutal, pernicious ideology in America for decades because white viewers in America wouldn’t care, Mac Donald argued that the reality “is that the black leaders don’t care either.”

“As hard as it is to believe, given the deep roots of racism in American society, I think we have done a 180-degree turn,” she said. Now institutions across America are “obsessed with diversity” and focusing on hiring more people of color.

“It’s the most worrisome in the scientific sector where you have Silicon Valley now—every big tech firm, Google, Microsoft, Amazon—they are all obsessed with diversity and identity, focused primarily on females,” Mac Donald said.

“We’re putting our competitive edge at risk by this wholesale attack on meritocracy. I don’t care what the race and gender is of the lab that’s going to discover Alzheimer’s [cure]. If they’re all female, fine, as long as they are the best scientists out there ... the only thing that should matter is their scientific expertise.”

Mac Donald pointed to Wikipedia, the online free encyclopedia, as an excellent test of the narrative about sexism. Wikipedia has no barriers to participation. “Anybody can write and edit, and it’s anonymous, and it’s blind,” she said. But, shockingly, “90 percent of all entries on Wikipedia are written by males.”

“There are differences between males and females on average. I’m not talking about anybody’s daughter out there. I’m not saying your daughter’s not going to win a Nobel Prize in physics. I’m talking about distributions and averages, which is what James Damore was trying to talk about in Google before he was fired. On average, males are more driven to this competitive, fact-based obsession, whether it’s sports or keeping track of every last voting district,” she said.

In 2017, James Damore wrote a memo arguing there may be other factors besides sexism that might explain the gender dis-



KE YUAN/THE EPOCH TIMES

proportionality at Google and other big tech firms. He was fired as a result.

In Mac Donald’s view, identity today has become a source of power. “The identity politics victimology says just by virtue of checking off various boxes of victimhood,” she said. “You get power, you get to silence your opponents and without using arguments.

“By virtue of being a female, I have more power than you do. And if I were a black female, I’d have twice, three times as much power as you do. But again, these are not based on anything that I’ve accomplished, but just based on my status.

“This is a very dangerous place to be in our society. It means that you no longer have a single standard of justice, of competence, of merit, but inevitably have at least two standards—if not many more, given the rapid fissuring of the various identity categories that go into this ruthlessly competitive totem pole of intersectional victimhood.”

Higher Education: Engines of Victimology

“The thing that I’m most upset about is what’s happening with the universities. It is absolute educational malpractice for the college administrators—whether it’s the presidents or these massive diversity bureaucracies—to tell students that they’re victims,” Mac Donald said.

To the contrary, Mac Donald argued, “every library, every classroom, every chemistry lab, it’s all open. And if those students are being so lied to that they think of themselves as oppressed on a college campus ... they are going to carry that chip on their shoulder that prevents them from seizing opportunities because they are angry, sullen, defensive all the time out in the real world.”

Mac Donald has been a vocal critic of affirmative action and what she sees as the corruption of the education system. Her newest book is “The Diversity Delusion: How Race and Gender Pandering Corrupt the University and Undermine Our Culture.”

College, in Mac Donald’s view, was once the land of lofty ideals, tasked with “passing on the inheritance of Western civilization” and endowing younger generations with “the privilege to study beauty and greatness and sublimity.”

“I aspired to become an academic. I can think of nothing more enriching and important in one’s life than to be in a university properly defined,” Mac Donald said. She graduated summa cum laude from Yale University and received her juris doctor from Stanford University Law School.

But now, she said, “we’re in a race against time.” Universities, once the vanguards of Western civilization, have become “the engines of this toxic victimology and identity politics.”

“Students and faculty should be down on their knees in gratitude for the opportunity to read the Greek tragedians, to read Aeschylus, to read Milton, to read Mark Twain, to read George Eliot. This is the greatest privilege one can have,” Mac Donald said. “And we’re betraying it by teaching students to hate—to hate the greatest products of civilization and, frankly, to hate each other.

“It is the thing that breaks my heart the most. It’s why I write out of sorrow and anger that we are destroying this institution that developed over centuries in the West that should be the repository for passing on an inheritance.

“You have a culture now that has decided to be so against itself, to hate its own accomplishments. The only analogy I can think of is the Chinese Cultural Revolution.” During this decade-long period, the Chinese communist regime ravaged Chinese society, overthrowing traditional ideas, morals, and spiritual beliefs with the argument that they were all backward and oppressive.

Such pernicious damage to education, in Mac Donald’s eyes, is occurring not just in higher education, but in K-12 as well. “It’s just absolutely heartbreaking and tragic that the left-wing, identity-based, hating mob has taken over K-12 education and is already telling students to think of themselves as either victims or oppressed, is celebrating various forms of dysfunction,” she said.

“I don’t know any civilization that can go forward without giving its members a sense of pride.”

But instead of studying the best aspects of Western civilization, “now education is all about rubbing kids’ nose in dysfunction and premature sexuality awareness,” she said.

As an antidote, she encourages parents to homeschool their children. “I would say, teach your kids to love greatness. Give them the great books, read them the children’s classics, develop in them an ear for language. Give them respect for beauty, for music, for Mozart, for Chopin, for Schubert to inoculate them against this hatred and self-loathing,” she said.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Workers pull a line from a cargo ship as it prepares to berth at a port in Qingdao, China, on Oct. 19, 2018.

Trump Versus the China Cowards

ROGER L. SIMON



Commentary

Oh, the vapors, the vapors. No sooner did President Donald Trump announce the likelihood of new China tariffs to activate Sept. 1 than out popped the U. S. Chamber of Commerce’s head of international affairs Myron Brilliant to inform us, “Tariffs are not the answer; escalation is not the answer.”

Then what is the answer? I hate to break it to Brilliant, but other than tariffs, the answer is nothing, niente, rien, nichts, nada ... unless you want to go to war with China, which I don’t think anybody is ready for.

This lack of alternatives was made evident during the last round of Democratic primary debates when the candidates were asked the same question—Would you keep the tariffs on China?—and did more than their usual fumbling before remembering their required (i.e., if Trump is doing it, it must wrong) rote answer—no. They didn’t sound convincing. To the contrary. They had befuddled expressions on their faces, as if caught with their ideological pants down.

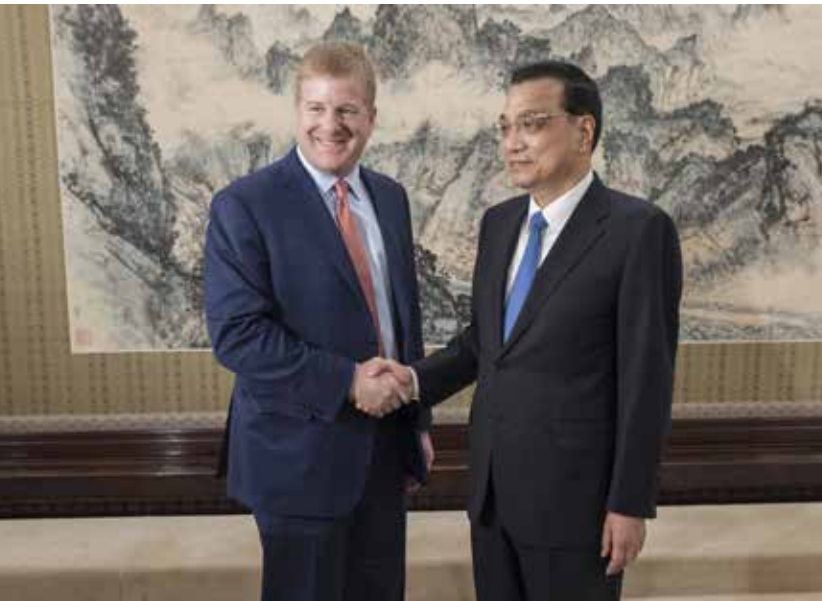
Beyond this phony political posturing or the pro form lobbyist’s response of Brilliant is a far more difficult question. Just how does a democracy negotiate with a totalitarian state?

According to a Wall Street Journal article earlier this week—“Beijing Slow-Walks Trade Talks”—the Chinese have chosen to wait us out, having come to the conclusion that time is on their side and the longer they delay, the better deal they will get.

Best of all, Trump could lose in 2020, and once again the Chinese will only have to deal with the complaisant pussycats they’ve had sitting opposite them in negotiations for the last several decades. China would be left alone to steal our intellectual property, undercut our workers, and manipulate their currency to their own advantage as they always have.

Of course, this depends on the conventional wisdom that Chinese leader Xi Jinping and crew will still be there. That seems likely on the face, but despite being the oldest of civilizations, or nearly, China has been subject to multiple revolutions, many with extremely violent results.

In recent times, the Tiananmen affair and now events in Hong Kong are especially noteworthy. What seems like a communist monolith is not entirely a stable country. Far from it, actually. The



REUTERS/AP/GETTY IMAGES

▲ Myron Brilliant, head of International Affairs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, meets with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Beijing on June 20, 2017.

Like it or not, no one has done much about China except Trump. The answer to the question about how a democracy negotiates with a totalitarian state is to line up behind a leader of courage and to stick with him.

President Donald Trump at the White House on July 19, 2019.



CHARLOTTE GUTENBERG/THE EPOCH TIMES

following from the Aug. 2 South China Morning Post is ominously reminiscent of Prague and Budapest before they were ultimately invaded by the Soviet army:

“The People’s Liberation Army is a pillar for stability in Hong Kong and will always abide by the law, Beijing said on Friday amid concerns it might mobilise troops to help bring an end to weeks of unrest in the city.”

It wasn’t long after invasions that the Soviet Union disintegrated. And like the Soviet Union, the People’s Republic is apparently in financial trouble.

Nevertheless, until now, until Trump, China has had its way in negotiations with the United States, and with most of the rest of the world as well. Greed and cowardice have prevailed over courage and fair trade. Too many U.S. corporations—Google and Apple noteworthy among them—preferred to profit off the People’s Republic rather than confront it. Google came painfully close to actually creating a censored search engine for the communist regime.

If anything, our politicians have been worse. They followed the principle of going along to get along or, more accurately, going along to get theirs, as Joe Biden and John Kerry did with their sons and stepsons, as if China were a cash machine for progeny.

Like it or not, no one has done much about China except Trump. The answer to the question about how a democracy negotiates with a totalitarian state is to line up behind a leader of courage and to stick with him.

Negotiations almost always have ups and downs. Convince the totalitarians that you mean business. Throw aside partisan considerations “at the water’s edge.” That used to be a hallmark of U.S. foreign policy that has dwindled over the years and now barely exists in the age of Trump. Exacerbating the situation is the seemingly unending political campaign coupled with the inability to accept the legitimate authority of a president for even a minute.

Not being fools, the Chinese see this dissension, and we are paying the price.

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Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

New York’s Cultural Revolutionary Education Reforms

JEAN VINCENT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

CLIFFORD HUMPHREY



Commentary

On July 31, the New York State Board of Regents initiated a cultural revolution. The politically progressive board—which supervises all public schools in the state—voted unanimously to declare war on the “complex system of biases and structural inequities ... deeply rooted in our country’s history, culture, and institutions.”

They concluded from a swath of social science studies that traditional methods of education perpetuate a culture of racism and a system of inequity. The only solution, they believe, is to incorporate into education an emphasis on “sociopolitical consciousness” that will lead to “sociocultural responsiveness” in order to supplant the dominant framework.

Their strategy is to transform teachers and students into social justice activists by transforming schools into learning environments that “affirm cultural identities,” “elevate historically marginalized voices,” and “empower students as agents of social change.” They call this a “Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework.”

The 64-page description of the framework presents a properly educated student as one who is conscious or “woke” to his own and other’s “implicit biases” (the word “bias” appears 44 times), and is “empowered” (15 times) to “advocate” (16 times) for “social change” (12 times).

In other words, being educated means becoming a political activist just as much as becoming proficient in traditional subjects of learning. Parkland, Florida, gun-control activists such as David Hogg seem to be the new ideal student.

One might think the Board of Regents is simply more interested in producing a certain kind of activist than it is in producing an educated student. Interestingly enough, though, according to the framework, there’s no difference between the two.

All U.S. citizens should be aware of what is going on in New York. They should understand this new vision of education because it describes what the board considers an excellent human being, and that description reveals the way progressives hope to transform the entire American regime.

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education

The attempt to incorporate subversive political activism into an education system, and thereby change what it means to be a good citizen, is not new. The framework’s educational reforms bear an uncanny resemblance to those that Mao Zedong—founder of the Chinese Communist Party—advocated. Here are some examples sufficient to demonstrate this resemblance.

An educated student is one who is made conscious of systemic inequities:

“Our educational policy must enable everyone who receives an education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and become a worker with both socialist consciousness and culture.”—Mao Zedong

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework:

- “Critical and continuous self-reflection is required to dismantle systems of biases and inequities rooted in our country’s history, culture, and institutions.”
- “Employ a critical pedagogy that empowers students to see themselves as agents of social change and architects of their own destinies.”
- “Employ a critical lens (racial, gender, sexual identity, linguistic, religious, ability, socioeconomic, or other salient cultural identities) when developing resources and intervention frameworks to de-center dominant ideologies and pedagogies that ignore or marginalize diverse students.”
- “Students bring a critical lens to the world as they study historical and contemporary conditions of inequity and learn from historically marginalized voices. Students learn about power and privilege in the context of various communities and are empowered as agents of positive social change.”
- “Continuously learn about implicit bias, with attention to identifying and addressing implicit bias in the school community.”

An educated student is able to engage in destructive-constructive self-criticism:

“There is no construction without destruction. Destruction means criticism and repudiation; it means revolution. It involves reasoning things out, which is construction. Put destruction first, and in the process you have construction.” —Mao Zedong



Chinese Red Guards, high school and university students, wave copies of Chairman Mao Zedong’s “Little Red Book,” during a parade in Beijing’s streets at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in June 1966. During China’s Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), under Mao’s direction, Red Guards rampaged through much of the country, humiliating, torturing, and killing perceived class enemies, and pillaging cultural symbols that were deemed as not representative of the communist revolution.

The attempt to incorporate subversive political activism into an education system, and thereby change what it means to be a good citizen, is not new.

Demonstrators from Washington-area law schools march to the U.S. Capitol to protest against the confirmation of then-Supreme Court nominee Judge Brett Kavanaugh on Oct. 6, 2018.

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework:

- Students are admonished to “identify inequity and challenge it when you see it.”
- And to “identify and address implicit bias in the school and community environment.”
- Teachers are admonished to “strive to be culturally sustaining by centering the identities of all students in classroom instruction, encouraging cultural pluralism rather than asking students to minimize their identities in order to be successful.”
- To “provide opportunities for students to critically examine topics of power and privilege.”
- And to “continuously learn about implicit bias, with attention to identifying and challenging your own biases, and identifying and addressing implicit bias in the school community.”

An educated student is able to criticize and denounce reigning power structures:

“While [students’] main task is to study, they should in addition to their studies ... criticize the bourgeoisie. The period of schooling should be shortened, education should be revolutionized, and the domination of our schools by bourgeois intellectuals should by no means be allowed to continue.”—Mao Zedong

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework:

- Students are admonished to “identify, discuss and dismantle implicit bias in curriculum and assessment.”
- To “challenge power and privilege where present, or absent, in the curriculum by locating other resources or requesting curriculum that is inclusive of multiple perspectives.”
- To “identify gaps where the current curriculum does not address multiple perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds. Advocate for fair representation of these absent perspectives.”
- And to “engage in difficult conversations, particularly those that challenge power and privilege in our society.”

Successful overthrow of the current system requires activism at every level of

education:

“The proletarian revolution in education should be carried out by relying on the masses of the revolutionary students, teachers, and workers in the schools, by relying on the activists among them, namely those proletarian revolutionaries who are determined to carry the great proletarian cultural revolution through to the end.”—Mao Zedong

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework:

- The Framework embraces a comprehensive initiative for all of society. It includes directives for each of the following categories: students, teachers, school leaders, district leaders, families and communities members, higher education and faculty administrators, and education department policymakers.
- Teachers are admonished to “engage students in youth participatory action research that empowers youth to be agents of positive change in their community.”
- District leaders are admonished to “work to improve the recruitment and retention of a diverse teacher workforce (i.e. teachers who identify as people of color, LGBTQIA+, differently-abled).”

No doubt the authors of this framework believe the current culture and general way of doing education are rampant with injustice. They are entitled to their opinions, but they are obligated to use persuasion—not propaganda—to convince the rest of society to accept these positions.

Diverting time and attention away from standard fields of study by foisting progressive political opinions on impressionable children doesn’t serve the welfare of students. Further, turning our youth into an American kind of Red Guard to transform society isn’t the way of a free people.

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