

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# OUR NATION

A young woman, who made an emergency call to 911, waits outside her apartment building as firemen try to revive a friend who overdosed on heroin in Manchester, N.H., on March 28, 2018.

## As Opioids Ravage Communities, Locals Unite in Response

From faith groups to treatment centers, state and local communities are starting to make headway in helping to reduce opioid deaths **8**



# Over a Million Households Climbed to Middle Class Under Trump, Census Data Shows



JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

PETR SVAB

More than 1.2 million American households moved to above \$50,000 in annual income between 2016 and 2018, according to Census Bureau data released on Sept. 10, a sign of a growing middle class.

The data is a boon to President Donald Trump, whose platform is centered on a strong economy and promises of increased prosperity.

While in 2016, some 58.5 percent of households enjoyed more than \$50,000 in total money income, the share rose to more than 60 percent in 2018. The median household income, meanwhile, rose by nearly 2.3 percent—with all figures adjusted for inflation.

The comparison isn't quite apples-to-apples since the bureau implemented a new methodology in its latest report that somewhat influenced the results for both 2018 and 2017.

Still, the data bears out a middle-class expansion unseen since the 1960s. Nearly 30 percent of households pulled in between \$50,000 and \$99,999 in 2018. That's up from less than 29 percent the year before—the fastest increase since 1968.

### Middle Class Woes

America has done a decent job of lifting up its poor, with the number of households earning less than \$25,000 a year dropping by about 20 percent since 1968. The improvement is more significant when taking into account that the average household size has decreased from about 3.2 people to 2.5 people in the same period.

Furthermore, the country multiplied its rich (those with households earning over \$200,000 year) more than eightfold, to 8.5 percent in 2018 from just 1 percent in 1968.

The middle class, however, had shrunk considerably. While in 1968, over 38 percent of households earned over \$50,000 and under \$100,000, the percentage dropped to 28.6 by 2014.

### Signs of Change

In many respects, 2018 was a significant year for the middle class.

In the first months of 2018, the unemployment rate remained stuck at 4.1 percent, seemingly confirming forecasts of some economists that the 4 percent barrier signifies full employment. But the economy kept adding jobs. By the year's end, unemployment fell to 3.7 percent, the lowest since 1969. Despite some ups and

While in 1968, more than 38 percent of households earned over \$50,000 and under \$100,000, the percentage dropped to 28.6 by 2014.

downs, the rate still stood at 3.7 percent in August 2019.

The progress has been even more apparent for black Americans, whose unemployment rate dropped below 7 percent for the first time in December 2017 and in May 2018 fell further to 5.9 percent. That record held for more than a year until it was also shattered in August as the rate hit 5.5 percent.

### Money in Pockets

Another shift happened in wage growth.

In early 2018, it was high-wage industries that had the fastest growth (about 3 percent). But by the year's end and into 2019, annual growth has been strongest in low-wage industries—about 4.7 percent—according to an Aug. 2 data analysis by Martha Gimbel, research director at

job-seeking site Indeed.

It was also those with the lowest education enjoying the fastest wage growth, a July report from the Congressional Research Service showed.

### Less Welfare

Meanwhile, Americans have been weaning themselves off dependency on government programs.

In the first 29 months under Trump, food-stamp enrollment dropped by nearly 6.7 million. That compares with the less than 3.8 million drop under the last 29 months of the Obama presidency, which included a sudden drop of more than 770,000 in April 2016, when work requirements for able-bodied adults came into effect. Prior to that, the requirements were waived by most states, due to the 2008 recession.

Enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP, government-sponsored health insurance for children and the poor, also declined under Trump by more than 2.9 million between January 2017 and June 2019.

### Push on China

Trump has benefited from entering office during a period of expansion, yet the economy has also been boosted by his cutting of taxes and regulations. By fostering a pro-business climate, he also sparked optimism for investment.

The economic strength and the resilience of the labor market, in particular, have given Trump room to mount unprecedented economic pressure on China, whose communist regime has long been hurting the United States with unfair trade practices such as forced technology transfer, theft of intellectual property, and currency manipulation.

While negotiations with the regime continue, Trump has been raising tariffs on an increasing share of imports from China and plans to add still more.

The United States has collected tens of billions on the tariffs, though they've also led to increased prices of some products for Americans.

NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



The economic strength and the resilience of the labor market in particular have given Trump room to mount unprecedented economic pressure on China.

(Top) Diego Perez works on a Toll Brothers home in Boca Raton, Fla., on Aug. 21, 2018.

(Right) President Donald Trump at the White House on July 11, 2019.

(Bottom) A Ford Motor Co. worker operates a Creaform laser scanning measuring device at the Ford Dearborn Truck Plant in Dearborn, Mich., on Sept. 27, 2018.



BILL PUOLIANO/GETTY IMAGES



REUTERS/FILE PHOTO



ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES



## House Panel Requests Documents From Facebook, Google, Amazon, Apple in Probe

BOWEN XIAO

House lawmakers have demanded that big tech companies Facebook, Google, Amazon, and Apple turn over a wide range of documents including sensitive internal emails from the companies' top executives, the biggest development so far in a bipartisan congressional antitrust probe.

Leaders of the House Judiciary Committee and its subcommittee on antitrust sent out separate letters on Sept. 13 to the four companies, seeking the documents as well as detailed financial information and other company records. The order comes as both Republicans and Democrats in Congress conduct a sweeping investigation into the tech companies and their effect on competition and consumers.

The letters requested internal emails over the past decade from Apple CEO Tim Cook, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, and Alphabet CEO Larry Page, as well as other top executives about acquisitions; the deadline was set for Oct. 14. The House letters offer the first concrete evidence of a wide-ranging antitrust investigation.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) signed the letters, along with ranking member Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.). Antitrust subcommittee chair Rep. David Cicilline (D-R.I.), and subcommittee ranking member Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.).

Big tech companies are facing a historic wave of scrutiny, with antitrust investigations launched at both the state and federal level. The Justice Department (DOJ) and the Federal Trade Commission are investigating Facebook, Google, Apple, and Amazon for potential violations of antitrust law. A partnership of about 50 U.S. states and territories, led by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, is also probing Google's practices, while a separate bipartisan coalition of attorneys general in eight states are looking at possible antitrust issues with Facebook.

The committee requested information from the companies' executives on market share, competitors, their largest customers for specific products, and documents from other investigations. On Sept. 12, the House antitrust panel held a hearing on the effects of consumer data collection by big tech platforms on other companies

(Top) The logos of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google.

(Middle) Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) (L) talks to Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.) at the Capitol on Feb. 25, 2019.

(Right) The entrance to the House Judiciary Committee room on Capitol Hill on March 22, 2019.

(Bottom) A woman looks at her smartphone as she walks past Google offices in New York on June 3, 2019.

and online competition. It was the first of three sessions to focus on antitrust issues.

"The requests by House committees appear to focus on acquisition and potential abuses of market power rather than on agreements among competitors," New York attorney Barry Barnett, who has expertise in antitrust law, told The Epoch Times in a Sept. 15 email.

"The breadth of the document requests implies a readiness to engage in a possibly long, resource-intensive, and disruptive effort to identify, gather

evidence regarding, and potentially bring enforcement actions to halt or reverse acquisitions if they have created or sustained monopolies or aimed to do so."

Barnett also questioned if investigators are interested in moving away from a "narrow consumer-welfare approach" to one of "antitrust enforcement."

"Regardless, the probes will likely keep antitrust lawyers busy for years," he said.

At a hearing of the antitrust panel in July, executives of the four companies pushed back against lawmak-

ers' accusations that they operate as monopolies, laying out ways in which they say they compete fairly, yet vigorously, against rivals in the marketplace. Cicilline, the chairman of the antitrust subcommittee, said he was dissatisfied with answers the executives gave to lawmakers, calling their testimony "evasive."

President Donald Trump has accused big tech companies such as Twitter, Facebook, and Google of suppressing and censoring conservative voices.

Facebook, Amazon, and Apple didn't respond to requests for comment. A Google spokesperson previously referred The Epoch Times to a blog post by Kent Walker, Google's senior vice president of global affairs, who said the company is "engaging in robust and fair competition."

### The Big Four

House lawmakers, in their letter to Facebook, asked for internal emails from executives about their acquisitions of Instagram, WhatsApp, and Onavo, and of Facebook's decision to cut off apps such as MessageMe from its social graph. Financial statements or reports since 2016, for Facebook's ads, messengers, and Instagram also were requested. Critics say the company intentionally walled itself off from other online apps, enabling it to amass nearly 2.5 billion users with no clear competitor.

For Google, lawmakers seek financial documents on their wide range of products and services including Ad Sense, its Android platform, Gmail, and YouTube, among others. The letter requested internal communications from relevant executives on Google's 2007 acquisition of online advertising company DoubleClick and Google's acquisitions of YouTube and Android. Critics often point to Google's purchase of DoubleClick as pivotal to their advertising dominance.

Financial records of some of Apple's products and services including their App Store, iCloud, and Siri were requested by lawmakers in their letter. The lawmakers are seeking internal communications on Apple's decision to remove from the App Store or to impose restrictions on some screen-time and parental-control apps, and on the App Store algorithm that determines the ranked order of search apps on the site, among other areas.

Amazon was asked to hand over financial documents for Alexa, Amazon Prime, Echo, and Whole Foods, among others. Internal emails of executives were requested in the letter regarding Amazon's algorithm that determines search ranking of products, as well as their policy on the types of data the company does or doesn't make available to Marketplace sellers.

In July, the Justice Department announced that its antitrust division is "reviewing whether and how market-leading online platforms have achieved market power and are engaging in practices that have reduced competition, stifled innovation, or otherwise harmed consumers." The department said it will probe concerns related to "search, social media, and some retail services online." Google has said previously that the Justice Department in August requested documents from the company.

Reuters and The Associated Press contributed to this report



DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES



DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES

Big tech companies are facing a historic wave of scrutiny, with antitrust investigations launched at both the state and federal level.



# Trump Urges House Republicans to ‘Fight Like Hell’ for 2020, Defeat Socialism



President Donald Trump speaks at the 2019 House Republican Conference Member Retreat Dinner at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront in Maryland on Sept. 12, 2019.

EMEL AKAN

**B**ALTIMORE—At a closed-door Republican annual conference on Sept. 12, President Donald Trump knocked Democrats for embracing “radical socialism” and urged GOP lawmakers “to fight like hell” to win the 2020 election.

“With the grim specter of socialism descending on the Democrat Party, it is up to all of us ensure the survival of American liberty,” Trump said at the 2019 House Republican Conference member retreat in Baltimore.

“Democrats in Congress have embraced an extreme, destructive, and dangerous agenda, radical socialism, and open borders,” he said, criticizing a wide range of proposals by Democrats such as Medicare for All and the Green New Deal.

Trump said his administration has accomplished “tremendous changes” in the country and promised more changes, including further tax cuts.

“We are working on a tax cut for the middle-income people,” Trump said. “We’ll be announcing it sometime in the next year but it’ll be a very, very substantial tax cut for middle-income folks who work so hard.”

Trump, however, urged Republicans “to prepare for the coming fight because the traditions and beliefs that have made the American dream possible are under attack like never before.”

He said the country “will go to hell if any of these people [Democrats] get in.”

Trump also slammed the media for “colluding” with Democrats.

“We are fighting two battles: Democrats and the media. It is as if they are one. They are working together. They’re colluding and they’re obstructing,” he said.

Trump congratulated North Carolina Republicans Dan Bishop and Greg Murphy, who won the state’s special elections on Sept. 11, saying it made for a “great evening of television.”

“I would not say the fake news was too happy with the outcome,” he added.

Trump also took aim at top 2020 Democratic candidates Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and former Vice President Joe Biden.

“I hit Pocahontas way too early. I

**We are fighting two battles: Democrats and the media. It is as if they are one. They are working together. They’re colluding and they’re obstructing.**

President Donald Trump

thought she was gone. She’s emerged from the ashes and now it looks like she could beat Sleepy Joe. He’s falling asleep. He has no idea what the hell he’s doing or saying.”

Trump addressed his earlier insults against Baltimore, saying that the city has been “destroyed by decades of failed and corrupt rule.”

**Baltimore**

The retreat was originally scheduled for late January in West Virginia, but was postponed due to the federal government shutdown.

This was Trump’s first visit to Baltimore since calling the city “filthy” two months ago and “a disgusting, rat and rodent-infested mess.” He launched repeated criticisms at Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) after the lawmaker criticized the conditions at the southern border.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) defended Trump’s visit to Baltimore, saying at a news conference during the retreat that the

“president made a very good case why many major cities have challenges.”

“I think the president’s coming here symbolizes that, yes, he cares about Baltimore. He cares about the people who live in Baltimore, and he does not accept that you have to stay in poverty,” he said.

McCarthy said House Republicans would be discussing a wide range of topics during the retreat, including national security, federal debt, environment, data privacy, and housing finance reform.

Trump’s speech at the retreat lasted more than an hour. He started his remarks at 8 p.m.—the same time the Democratic candidates took the stage in Houston for the third debate of the 2020 primaries.

“It’s too bad I’m going to miss it,” Trump told reporters before heading to Baltimore. He said that he would have the debate taped.

“It’s going to be very interesting. I look forward to going home. I’m going to have to watch it as a rerun.”



Mayor Bill de Blasio holds a Green New Deal rally at Trump Tower in New York on May 13, 2019.

## SURVEY

# 53 Percent of Likely Voters Oppose Dems’ Union Pension Bailout

MARK TAPSCOTT

**A**

national survey of likely voters found a majority of them oppose a taxpayer-funded bailout of ailing union pension plans approved earlier this year by the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives.

“The latest Rasmussen Reports national telephone and online survey finds that 53 percent of likely U.S. voters oppose a taxpayer bailout of underfunded union pension funds,” the survey firm said Sept. 14. “Just 26 percent support a pension bailout. A sizable 21 percent are undecided.”

Among Democrats, only 36 percent support the measure, compared to 17 percent of Republicans and 22 percent of likely voters who identified with neither of the two major political parties.

The survey, conducted Sept. 11–12, has a 3 percentage-point margin of error, with a 95 percent confidence level.

The Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act of 2019 was approved by the House of Representatives in a 264–169 vote on July 24, with 29 Republicans joining 235 Democrats in voting for the measure, which was first introduced by Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.).

The measure would create within the Department of the Treasury a new Pension Rehabilitation Administration (PRA) to establish and manage a



House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal talks to reporters at the U.S. Capitol, on April 4, 2019.

**CBO projects that about one-quarter of the affected pension plans would become insolvent in the 30-year loan period and would not fully repay their loans.**

Congressional Budget Office

Pension Rehabilitation Trust Fund, which would make tax dollars available through loans and direct cash assistance to insolvent union pensions to invest in the stock market and pay benefits.

The main beneficiaries of the measure, if it becomes law, would be pension programs of more than 130 trade unions that represent employees from multiple companies within an industry. Such pension plans were exempted by Congress from the government’s requirement that private sector companies fully fund promised benefits. The exemption allows the union plans to set aside funding for less than 100 percent of projected benefit costs.

Among the most seriously underfunded union pension programs are those of the United Mine Workers of America, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, and the New England Teamsters and Trucking Industry Union.

News earlier this week said that a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) analysis projected that the Democratic bailout measure would at best provide only a stop-gap solution for a minority of the plans, but ultimately all of them would still be likely to fail.

“CBO projects that about one-quarter of the affected pension plans would become insolvent in the 30-year loan period and would not fully repay their loans,” the federal agency told Sen.

Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) in a Sept. 7 letter.

“Most of the other plans would become insolvent in the decade following their repayment of their loans,” CBO told Enzi. The Wyoming Republican is chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget.

Hundreds of thousands of union retirees would lose their pensions as a result of the failure of their program.

Despite the opposition to the tax-funded bailout, Rasmussen found continued public support for labor unions in general.

“Fifty-five percent of all voters have a favorable opinion of labor unions, a finding that has ranged from 44 percent to 58 percent in surveys since 2006,” Rasmussen said.

Twenty-one percent of Rasmussen’s likely voter respondents said they have a “very favorable” opinion of labor unions, while 13 percent said they have a “very unfavorable” view of them.

President Donald Trump hasn’t taken an official position on the bailout measure, but many of the union members and retirees who would be affected live in states that are crucial to his re-election hopes in 2020.

Those states include Wisconsin, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, which Trump unexpectedly carried in his 2016 victory against former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the heavily favored Democratic nominee.

Nationally, less than 7 percent of all private-sector workers are union members, but their numbers are more concentrated in the Rust Belt states that were once home to thriving manufacturing industries.

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Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.) speaks on Capitol Hill on Jan. 30, 2019.





The storage tanks at Saudi Aramco's North Jeddah Bulk Plant in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Sept. 15, 2019.

PETR SVAB

President Donald Trump on Sept. 16 questioned Iran's denial of involvement in the recent drone attacks on oil facilities that knocked down half of Saudi Arabia's daily production.

He compared it to an earlier claim Iran made after shooting down an American drone in June.

"Remember when Iran shot down a drone, saying knowingly that it was in their 'airspace' when, in fact, it was nowhere close," Trump said in a tweet. "They stuck strongly to that story knowing that it was a very big lie. Now they say that they had nothing to do with the attack on Saudi Arabia. We'll see?"

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for what was initially reported as drone attacks on the world's largest oil-processing facility in Saudi Arabia and a major oil field on Sept. 14. The resulting fires halted about 5.7 million barrels in daily crude oil production, Saudi state oil company Aramco said.

The attacks interrupted nearly 58 percent of Saudi Arabia's and more than 5.5 percent of the world's daily oil production, based on August numbers from the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Oil prices hiked nearly 16 percent since Sept. 13, reaching more than \$69 per barrel in the early afternoon of Sept. 16, based on the leading oil price index, Brent Crude.

Riyadh said it would compensate for the loss by drawing on its stocks, which stood at 188 million barrels in June, according to official data. Trump announced on Sept. 15 that the United States will also release some of its reserves, which stood at nearly 645 million barrels as of Sept. 13.

Two sources briefed on Aramco's operations told Reuters it might take months for Saudi oil production to return to normal.

#### Blame

U.S. State Secretary Mike Pompeo on Sept. 14 blamed Iran for the attacks.

A day later, Tehran dismissed the accusation.

U.S. officials said they believed the attacks came from the opposite direction, possibly from Iran itself rather than Yemen, and may have involved cruise missiles.

Missile fragments found after the attacks suggest it was either the Iranian-made Soumar cruise missile or the Quds-1 missile used by Houthis, which is "clearly derived from the Soumar," said Rick Fisher, senior fellow on Asian Military Affairs at the International Assessment and Strategy Center, a Virginia-based think tank.

He said the Soumar missile was reverse-engineered from the Russian KH-55, obtained by China from Ukraine in the 1990s.

A Saudi-led military alliance battling the Houthis said the attack was done

Iran is hoping to escape blame by arming a proxy—the Houthi forces. And in turn, China is also hoping to escape blame by arming a larger proxy—Iran.

Rick Fisher, senior fellow, International Assessment and Strategy Center

President Donald Trump at the White House on Sept. 16, 2019.

The Associated Press, Reuters, and Epoch Times staff writer Jack Phillips contributed to this report.

with Iranian weapons and was not launched from Yemen, according to preliminary findings.

#### China Behind the Curtain

Fisher pointed to China as the beneficiary of the escalation of Saudi-Iranian tensions.

"Iran is hoping to escape blame by arming a proxy—the Houthi forces. And in turn, China is also hoping to escape blame by arming a larger proxy—Iran," he said.

"But when you look at the systems that are being employed, it's very clear that in the Middle East, China is trying to play both sides against the middle [the United States] for the ultimate benefit of China."

China has been buying oil from and supplying military technology to both Iran and Saudi Arabia in an effort to make both countries dependent on it. That makes the U.S. position more difficult: If the United States engages too much with the conflict, it could be drawn into a war. If it disengages too much, China may eventually sweep in, posing as a peacemaker, using its leverage on both sides to make the conflict deescalate, thus politically displacing U.S. influence in the region, Fisher said.

Trump seems to be countering China's influence on Riyadh. He's approved massive arms sales to the Saudis, who have fought the Houthis in the Yemeni civil war since 2015. The U.S. military provides intelligence and targeting support to Saudi airstrikes, as well as mid-flight refueling to its aircraft.

Trump has consistently said he's ready both for a conflict as well as negotiations with Tehran, saying he's hoping for the latter. He also has said the United States is not seeking a regime change in Iran and has predicted Iran will eventually start negotiating as the sanctions squeeze its economy.

"I know they want to make a deal. ... At some point, it will work out," he told reporters on Sept. 16.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Aug. 27 that he would only meet Trump if the sanctions were lifted.

Pompeo laid out 12 demands last year that Iran needs to comply with before the sanctions are lifted, such as ending its ballistic missile program, verifiably abandoning any military dimension to its nuclear program, curtailing its nuclear program to avoid the means of producing nuclear weapons-grade plutonium, stopping its support of terrorist groups and militias including Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis, and withdrawing its forces from Syria.

#### Aggressive Actions

Iran seems to have escalated aggressive actions in the region since the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on much of the Iranian economy.

After the U.S. drone was shot down on June 20, Trump said he called off a retaliatory strike at the last moment to prevent loss of life. Instead, he ordered cyberattacks on Iranian targets, multiple media reported.

A week earlier, on June 13, two oil tankers were attacked near the strait in the Gulf of Oman. The United States has blamed Iran, which denied responsibility. The U.S. military then released video and images that appear to show Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps removing a mine from the hull of one of the tankers, suggesting that Iran sought to remove evidence of its involvement.

Iran also attempted to shoot down a U.S. drone arriving at the scene of the attacks, according to a Fox News report that cited a senior U.S. official.

On July 4, authorities in Gibraltar, with the United Kingdom's assistance, seized an Iranian oil tanker that they said was smuggling oil to Syria in breach of European Union sanctions.

Iran denied the allegation and on July 19 seized a Sweden-owned tanker flying a British flag.

On July 18, a U.S. amphibious assault ship shot down an Iranian drone in what Trump described as a "defensive action."

On July 22, Iran claimed to have captured 17 CIA spies, which Trump said is false.

And on Aug. 20, a U.S. drone was shot down by a surface-to-air missile over Yemen, multiple media reported.

#### Nuclear Deal

The Iran nuclear deal, called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was signed during the Obama administration by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council—the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France—along with Germany.

On May 8, Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the deal and reimpose "the highest level of economic sanction[s]," which had been lifted under the deal. The two main concerns that the Trump administration had with the deal were that it included so-called sunset clauses, which would have allowed Iran to install thousands of advanced uranium centrifuges by 2026. Another concern was that Iran's ballistic missile development was not covered under the agreement.

The withdrawal from the agreement came after Iran was given months of opportunity to renegotiate these parts of the deal.

Iran tried to salvage the deal with the remaining signatories, but the European nations largely failed to deliver on promises of devising a trade mechanism that would dodge U.S. sanctions. On July 1, Iran announced that it had accumulated 300 kilograms of uranium hexafluoride, which would have put it in breach of the deal.

On July 7, Iranian officials announced that Tehran had begun to increase uranium enrichment to 5 percent concentration, beyond the limit set in the deal.



Judge Brett M. Kavanaugh at the Senate Judiciary Committee during the third day of his confirmation hearing to serve as an associate justice on the U.S. Supreme Court at the U.S. Capitol on Sept. 6, 2018.

## Grant for Colonial Era Church Raises Constitutional Issues

MARK TAPSCOTT

Bourne is a quiet little town on the banks of the Cape Cod Canal whose 20,000 or so residents occupy Massachusetts soil that was first settled by the Pilgrims in 1627.

Cataumet United Methodist Church isn't quite that old, but its lofty steeple has been a familiar landmark in Bourne for more than a century. The structure hosts Methodist services on Sundays and numerous other religious and secular community meetings during the week.

The old gathering place now needs a new cedar shingle roof, which could be funded by a proposed \$10,000 grant under the Bourne Community Preservation Act (CPA) program.

But opposition to the grant is simmering within the CPA review committee, while officials await a requested expedited advisory opinion from Robert Troy, Bourne's town counsel, on whether the grant would be unconstitutional and a violation of the doctrine of separation of church and state.

Either way the grant proposal is ultimately decided, odds are good there will be litigation that could well put Bourne and its historic old church at the center of a potential landmark constitutional legal battle.

#### Debate Anticipated

"If a historic preservation committee would refuse to fund cedar shingles for a church building that has existed before our republic on the basis that it is a religious entity making the request, then that kind of hostility toward religion will have to be challenged in court," Jeremy Dys told The Epoch Times on Sept. 16.

"Thankfully, the Supreme Court of the United States has already indicated a willingness to consider that very case," Dys said.

Dys is deputy general counsel of the First Liberty Institute, a Plano, Texas-based legal foundation that specializes in religious freedom litigation across the nation.

The town counsel advisory opinion reportedly was sought by CPA Chairman Barry Johnson, who doubles as Bourne's town clerk. Johnson cited a similar grant proposal for another church in Bourne that was approved but that sparked intense community debate in the process in 2009.

"CPA Chairman Barry Johnson said that since then, there have been two

Municipal funding of cedar shingles for a building that has stood in the same place in town for at least 126 years should pose little concern to the Constitution of the United States.

Jeremy Dys, deputy general counsel, First Liberty Institute



Jeremy Dys, deputy general counsel of the First Liberty Institute.

court cases involving CPA requests for church projects. He said the rulings may negatively impact the Cataumet request," Wicked Local, a digital Massachusetts community news site, reported Sept. 9.

"Johnson on September 3 sought a motion to ask Troy for an expedited opinion on the request. 'Then we would be able to decide if we want to take further action on this,' Johnson said," according to Wicked Local.

Neither Johnson nor Troy responded to email and telephone requests for comment from The Epoch Times.

#### Constitutional Issues

The likely constitutional issues were laid out by Dys in a Sept. 11 letter to Johnson, Troy, and other members of the committee. Dys made the letter available to The Epoch Times.

Dys pointed out in his letter that Cataumet was "launched as an Indian Meeting House prior to the founding of America, in 1765. Over the following centuries, congregants dismantled the colonial-style building and moved its location at least twice."

"It has stood on its present land since 1893. Clearly, the church building is a staple feature of the Bourne landscape. And, given the community has dismantled and rebuilt the building on a new location twice, town residents must care a great deal for the historic building," the letter states.

"It is understandable, therefore, why the Cataumet UMC trustees would seek assistance under the CPA for minor repairs to preserve the much-beloved, historic building.

"Municipal funding of cedar shingles for a building that has stood in the same place in town for at least 126 years should pose little concern to the Constitution of the United States."

Dys also cited eight Supreme Court decisions between 1978 and 2001, in which the justices held that "government may not discriminate against its citizens on the basis of religion and must treat religious individuals and organizations on equal footing with their secular neighbors."

He pointed to a 2016 case in which the high court was asked to determine if a state can require religious organizations to renounce their "religious character in order to participate in an otherwise generally available public benefit program, for which it is fully qualified."

In that decision, Trinity Lutheran

Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer, 137 S. Ct. 2012, 2024 (2017), Dys told the Bourne officials, "the court made clear that such requirements subject the state's action to the court's most exacting level of scrutiny."

"The justices concluded that disqualifying a religious organization 'from a public benefit for which it is otherwise qualified, solely because it is a church, is odious to our Constitution all the same, and cannot stand.'"

#### Neutrality

Dys also pointed to appeals in two similar cases that the high court rejected, Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders, et al. v. Freedom From Religion Foundation, et al. and The Presbyterian Church in Morristown, et al. v. Freedom from Religion Foundation, et al., 586 U. S. (2019).

"Justice Kavanaugh, writing for Justices Alito and Gorsuch, issued a statement highlighting the importance of religious neutrality in such programs," Dys wrote.

"Justice Kavanaugh concluded that 'barring religious organizations because they are religious from a general historic preservation grants program is pure discrimination against religion.'"

"At a very minimum, Justice Kavanaugh, and two of his colleagues, appears unconvinced that religious organizations—like Cataumet UMC—may be excluded from participating in preservation grants like the one in question simply because they are religious organizations.

"Such offends notions of fairness as much as the principles of equality the Religion Clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution are designed to protect.

"At least for Justice Kavanaugh, 'prohibiting historic preservation grants to religious organizations simply because the organizations are religious would raise serious questions under this Court's precedents and the Constitution's fundamental guarantee of equality.'"

The First Liberty attorney concluded his letter with a warning to Johnson, Troy, and the other CPA members that "should the Town of Bourne undertake to deny the proposed grant on that basis, it would likely be engaged in religious discrimination in violation of the Constitution."

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# As Opioids Ravage Communities, Locals Unite in Response

BOWEN XIAO

NEW YORK—As efforts to combat the opioid epidemic ramp up at the federal level, countless nonprofits and organizations at state and local levels spend each day dedicated to fighting the battle, oftentimes on the front lines.

The specific missions of these groups differ from each other, with some focusing on passing legislation in Congress, some promoting educational initiatives, while others organize faith-based programs. But all are united in a common goal: stemming the tide of the deadly opioid crisis, which, on average, takes the lives of 130 people every day across the United States.

One group that focuses on a prevention-first approach, Prevent Opioid Abuse, seeks to pass legislation on a state-by-state basis to increase transparency between those who prescribe opioids and their patients. The key purpose of the organization is to encourage state legislators to pass a law that requires prescription providers to notify their patients about the addictive qualities of opioids and to tell them about non-opioid alternatives to address acute pain.

“The reason this is so important is that so many people begin the disease of addiction and become addicted to heroin as a result of the prescribed medicine,” Angelo Valente, a representative of Prevent Opioid Abuse, told The Epoch Times. “Eighty percent of people who are addicted to heroin started with a prescription drug.”

The legislation, dubbed the “Patient Notification Law,” was first passed in New Jersey in 2017. Since then, 15 additional states have passed the same law, he said.

Valente said patients who are prescribed painkillers often have no idea of their potentially addictive nature. “It only takes five days for dependency to begin,” he added.

The opioid epidemic has been deemed a public health crisis. It has claimed the lives of nearly 400,000 people between 1999 and 2017, according to the latest U.S. data.

**Data and Fentanyl**  
About 159 miles from New Jersey, a local-level organization fights to reduce opioid deaths in York County,

**The specific missions of these groups differ from each other, but all are united in a common goal: stemming the tide of the deadly opioid crisis.**

Pennsylvania.

Brittany Shutz, executive director at the York Opioid Collaborative (YOC), told The Epoch Times that they first started to see a rise in opioid deaths in York in 2014.

The nonprofit is a collaborative effort between public safety and public health departments and agencies. Over the past few years, Shutz said there has been a “steady increase” in overdose deaths.

The YOC uses “data and evidence-based strategies” to promote a range of initiatives including providing training and education to the community on safe opioid prescribing and safe storage. The group also does academic detailing with physicians on this area.

One thing Shutz said she’s witnessed in the county is the rise of fentanyl-related deaths.

“Above 80 percent of our overdose deaths had fentanyl in them in 2018. In 2019, it’s trending about the same,” she said. “Unfortunately, we are seeing fentanyl in most of the drugs on the street, specifically heroin.”

Overdose deaths, despite slowing slightly since January 2017, increased to around 31,500 at the end of 2018 from around 28,600 at the end of 2017, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). China is the “largest source” of illicit fentanyl in the United States.

Recent cases of fentanyl-related overdose and deaths are linked to “illegally made fentanyl,” the CDC has stated. Fentanyl, which has been approved for treating severe pain for conditions such as late-stage cancer, is 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine, and is prescribed by doctors through transdermal patches or lozenges.

“It takes just a small amount to be deadly,” Shutz said. “You’re not really sure what you’re getting, and if fentanyl is in it, it increases your chances of eventually overdosing. It’s like Russian roulette.”

**The ‘Shame’**

Erin Khar, a former opioid addict who had struggled with addiction for more than a decade, told The Epoch Times she first started taking the drug when she was 13 years old in order to escape.

“I had first tried a painkiller I found in a medicine cabinet, an expired

painkiller and I liked the way it made me feel,” she said. “I struggled with depression as a child and I think I had that propensity to seek an exit from reality.”

She said at the time she started dating a 16-year boy who was experimenting with heroin, which she later tried. This was what began an addiction to opioids and her subsequent battle with it.

Khar described how she hid her addiction throughout her youth until she got caught by her fiancé at the age of 23. In college, she had used opioids on and off, and in her early 20s, she picked up heroin again after staying away from it for a few years. From there, it went downhill really fast, she said.

“I went to rehab for the first time when I was 23,” she explained. “I was determined to become sober, but it took another five years continually relapsing.”

At the age of 28, Khar found out she was pregnant. She found a doctor to detox her because she didn’t want her baby to be born addicted. She said her son’s birth was a turning point for her.

“It was the thing that got me to do all of the hard work I had to do on myself to make sure I didn’t turn back to drugs,” she said. “I made a commitment to myself. I started seeing a psychiatrist, worked through cognitive behavior therapy, really worked on the core issues that led me to addiction in the first place.”

Those core issues, Khar said, involved childhood trauma—she had been sexually abused as a child, another thing she had kept from her family. Khar is also the author of the forthcoming memoir “Strung Out.”

“I had that trauma I was hiding from everybody and I had an underlying mental health issue with the depression and feeling suicidal,” Khar said.

“They call them painkillers for a reason. Most people that become addicted to opioids are not seeking them for physical pain,” she continued.

For Khar, one of the feelings most associated with addiction—which she believes is true for most opioid addicts—is shame. Year by year, she carried it until she started opening up during therapy and was able to become more honest with herself.

“Let’s say you get off drugs tempo-

rarily, you’re still left with the shame of when you were addicted,” she said. “Shame really pushes people back into relapsing, and addiction again. It’s a terrible, terrible cycle.”

Khar said it’s unrealistic to think the United States can make a dent in the opioid crisis until we address the core issue first—why people turn to drugs in the first place.

**Faith**

Robert C. Whitley, an attorney based in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, has been focused on bringing together government leaders, the judicial system, and the faith community to team up against the opioid epidemic.

In the past two years, Whitley has helped organize the Bucks County faith summit, an annual event that takes place in October, when they invite roughly 250 to 300 churches in the country to raise awareness of the opioid epidemic, among other issues. The summit illustrates simple things the church could incorporate into their existing churches facilities to help.

In one particular instance, Whitley arranged an event with the St. Jude Church and the district attorney, who has supported efforts to engage in the faith community and the drug and alcohol commission. A board-certified physician spoke at the event.

In Bucks County, overdose deaths rose steadily in 2015, 2016, and 2017. In 2018, they dropped by 5 percent. This year, the overdose rate is down 10 percent, according to the county coroner who recently spoke at the Christian Life Center in Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

“The only thing I can attribute it to is not only the embracing of government leaders across the board here, but also the churches, the pastors, the faith community—they have really come together and are really working together,” Whitley told The Epoch Times. “The churches in the faith community have been huge here in Bucks County,” he said.

**Treatment Providers**

Also playing a pivotal role are addiction treatment providers. One such group, American Addiction Centers (AAC), became the first company of its kind to become publicly traded in the United States back in 2014.

Dr. Lawrence Weinstein, chief medical officer at AAC, told The Epoch Times that the center uses medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder, which he described as “the gold standard of care.” Their treatment includes assessments of each patient’s substance use disorder, their physical health, and their genetics, which helps their physicians choose the optimal medication for each individual.

He said their diagnostic testing allows them to analyze each patient’s genetics and determine their best course of treatment. They also treat patients with other disorders with integrated care—for example, treating patients’ addiction and their mental health disorders simultaneously.

“We help patients plan for life after treatment,” Weinstein said in an email. “We don’t just help patients get clean, we help them stay clean, with a plan and support to stay sober. Before patients leave treatment, we make sure they have everything they need to continue their recovery.”

Data suggests that of the approximately 2 million Americans suffering from opioid use disorder, approximately 1.27 million of them are now receiving medication-assisted treatment, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Weinstein said that with the help of a research institute, AAC utilized three years of tracking and research to analyze how their treatment impacted the lives of patients. He said they have treated thousands of patients, of which a “significant amount” achieved long-term recovery.

“The result was our patient outcome study that showed, out of the patients surveyed, 63 percent remained abstinent 12 months post-treatment compared to the national benchmark of 30 percent,” he said.



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

## One Reason Public Discourse Is So Vile, We’ve Forgotten the Meaning of First Amendment

ROB NATELSON

*Commentary*

We complain constantly about how vulgar, hateful, and polarized our public discourse has become. But most of us are unaware of one reason why current standards are so

low: the misinterpretation of the Constitution’s First Amendment.

The First Amendment prohibits laws “abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.” Those who adopted the amendment understood it to mean that government is absolutely barred from restricting expression within the known scope of “the freedom of speech” or within the known scope of “the freedom of the press.”

However, the amendment allowed officials to prohibit or regulate other expression, if they otherwise have constitutional power to do so.

But the free speech and free press rules that courts now use are largely unrelated to this meaning. During the 20th century, judges created an entirely new set of rules. They based them on how the judges balanced what they perceived as social benefits and social costs.

But, of course, judges have no special expertise in identifying or balancing social benefits and social losses. Not surprisingly, therefore, their rules turned out to be flawed. One of their flaws is that they pushed down the standards for public discourse.

Here are some examples, with their effects: Example No. 1: Lawsuits for defamation of character (slander and libel) traditionally allowed victims of smears to disprove false charges and vindicate their good names in court. They served as a sensible alternative to fighting duels. And by discouraging smears, they helped raise the general level of public discussion.

But during the 20th century, the Supreme Court curbed the right of “public figures” to sue for defamation. Now, smear-mongers can make baseless charges (“My opponent is a racist!”) knowing the victims usually cannot correct the record judicially. I experienced this myself when I was a candidate for governor of Montana: Unscrupulous detractors spread the rumor that I was a draft-dodger when, in fact, I had volunteered for military service. Modern Supreme Court rules denied me a judicial remedy.

Under the real meaning of the First Amendment, defamation is neither freedom of speech nor freedom of the press. Properly understood, the First Amendment allows public figures free access to the courts to restore their good names. Without such access, smear-mongers can act with impunity.

Example No. 2: Public discourse is now saturated with sexual, vulgar, and violent mes-

**Although the Supreme Court denies First Amendment protection to ‘obscene’ expression, it finds very few things to be ‘obscene.’**

sages. Most current movies would never pass historical standards. According to some accounts, 30 percent of data transmitted across the internet is pornographic.

In part, this is because, although the Supreme Court denies First Amendment protection to “obscene” expression, it finds very few things to be “obscene.”

Just to clarify: If the courts honored the First Amendment’s original meaning, verbal pornographic material for adults would still be protected. Censors probably couldn’t ban “Lady Chatterley’s Lover.”

However, officials could prohibit what the founding generation called “lewd displays.” They could bar live or filmed sexual or simulated sexual performances, and probably violent displays as well. This would end the “race to the bottom,” whereby entertainers and others vie with each other to see who can inflict the most social damage.

Example No. 3: Just as judge-made rules protect some expression they shouldn’t protect, they also muzzle some expression they should protect. For example, the Supreme Court now permits officials to force political organizations to disclose the names of their contributors. The result is a reign of terror against people who support politically incorrect causes. This also squelches honest debate.

Under the real meaning of the First Amendment, contributors to media advertisements have a right to anonymity that is part of “the freedom of the press.” You can contribute to public discussion without endangering yourself or your family—so long as you don’t defame others.

Example No. 4: The 20th-century Supreme Court ruled that commercial messages, such as advertising, receive less constitutional protection than political speech. This may enable politicians and regulators to punish

companies that advertise in ways displeasing to politicians and regulators.

But as originally understood, freedom of speech and press covers respectful public discourse on almost any topic—not just political, but also commercial, scientific, philosophical, and artistic. The First Amendment doesn’t subordinate commercial messages to political messages.

Example No. 5: The original meaning of the First Amendment protects good-faith theological discussion and disagreements. By way of illustration, it protects your right to argue against a religion by saying, “I don’t think its founder was a real prophet for the following reasons ...” But it doesn’t protect “blasphemous” speech. This means officials may curb insults hurled merely to hurt or enrage. Hence a claim that “that religion’s founder was the lying son of a terrible woman” falls outside the First Amendment, as originally understood.

Would the First Amendment’s original understanding be appropriate for the United States today? Perhaps not entirely. But some of the original rules continue to make sense. You can see this by reading founding-era newspapers and other media. The debate is robust and free-wheeling, but conducted at a generally higher standard than prevails now.

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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.*



BEIJING CHASTEN/THE EPOCH TIMES

JAMES E. BATTISON/SHUTTERSTOCK





A women's liberation demonstration in New York on Aug. 26, 1970.

## Children of the Great Scattering: Life After the Sexual Revolution

PAUL ADAMS



Commentary

Like fools, we rushed in. I came of age politically in the 1960s, earned my doctorate in the 1970s, and taught social work students (mostly at masters and doctoral level) until retiring in 2011. In the first period of the sexual revolution, my students and I mostly celebrated the revolution as a period of liberation for adults, especially women, from the constraints of tradition, law, and custom.

Insofar as we considered at all the impacts of the revolution on children, families, and communities, we minimized them or saw them as beneficial. Easy divorce would free children from having to grow up in loveless, conflict-ridden families. Thanks to the pill and abortion, all children would be "wanted." Children would be freed from the stigma of their parents' divorce or their mothers' unmarried status, cohabitation with an unrelated man, or other nontraditional family structures.

We didn't consider seriously the coming drop in fertility and the shrinkage of families. What was the impact on children to spend, as half of them now do, at least some of their childhood without one or both biological parents? What was the social impact of fatherlessness, of growing up with few or no siblings, of having few cousins, aunts, uncles, or little involvement of the father's side of the family?

Sometimes, especially at the end of the 20th century, a family scholar sounded the alarm, but far too few of us seriously examined these questions.

**Against all evidence, textbook authors, publishers, and professors persisted in perpetuating a false narrative about marriage and the needs of children as if it were factual.**



Mary Eberstadt.

Denial

These issues go to the heart of almost every social problem social workers address. Yet my students and I had difficulty discussing them frankly, no doubt in part because many or most of us were directly affected by them in a world of divorce, premarital sex, cohabitation, and lone parenthood.

There was also concern that noticing the adverse outcomes in education, criminal justice involvement, employment, mental health, and just about every other social indicator, from fractured families and fatherless children would stigmatize single mothers, children born out of wedlock, and cohabiting couples.

So we talked, not about the family, but families, as if one kind of family structure was as good as another and it was discriminatory to say otherwise. We could call for more public resources to meet the needs of single mothers and their children and praise the heroic struggles made by such mothers, but not worry that such family structures themselves disadvantaged children or that the government was bankrolling and incentivizing them by substituting for the role of fathers as providers and protectors.

Many of us saw such dependence on government as liberating women and children from dependence on men. Some described marriage, in the common phrase of the time, as a "hitting license"—ignoring the research evidence that women were safer in marriage than in any other kind of relationship, such as cohabitation. Children were most at risk of violence and abuse when living with their mother and her partner who wasn't the children's biological father.

Textbooks used in marriage and family courses treated marriage as pathological rather than what it had been understood as since it was recognized in the first legal codes millennia ago—as the optimum setting for raising children and assuring paternal responsibility. They continued to expound these distortions and expose hundreds of thousands of students to their ideology long after researchers of all political persuasions had shown them to be false.

Against all evidence, textbook authors, publishers, and professors persisted in perpetuating a false narrative about marriage and the needs of children as if it were factual.

Children of the Great Scattering

In her important new book, "Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics," Mary Eberstadt shows how the children of the sexual revolution responded to this brave new world with primal rage.

They grew toward adulthood in a state of panic over identity. They had lost the experience of a natural, intact family, not to war or disease but to the sexual consumerism of their parents. In the process, they were bereft of a clear answer to the question "Who am I?"

Previous generations, Eberstadt says, had answered the question in terms of their expectation of growing up in a family—the expectation that they would have children and a family themselves, that parents and siblings and extended family would remain their primal community, and thus, that it was a tragedy not to be part of a family.

Eberstadt discusses many aspects of the "Great Scattering" of families and the angry responses to it.

In some cases, young people whose interests were ignored when they were babies—like the children of anonymous sperm donors who were conceived with the deliberate intent from the start that they would grow up fatherless, without knowledge of or contact with their own biological father—found their own voice as young adults.

Unlike adoption, which had developed as a way to provide a child without a functioning family with parents, the aim in surrogacy was to meet the desires of adults, not the needs of children. But those children grew up and expressed publicly their sense of loss, as in organizations like The Anonymous Us Project and Stop Surrogacy Now.

One of the most striking manifestations of the anger and loss of sense of belonging is the profound shift in the pop music that children of the Great Scattering drove up the charts. It was no longer the music of abandon of their

parents' youth but, as Eberstadt says, the music of abandonment. It was an anger—expressed most powerfully, but not only, by rap superstar Eminem, against parents, especially fathers, for breaking up their families and leaving them to grow up with a dysfunctional childhood.

As Eberstadt puts it, "During the same years in which progressive-minded and politically correct adults have been excoriating Ozzie and Harriet as artifacts of 1950s-style oppression, millions of American teenagers have enshrined a new generation of music idols whose shared signature in song after song is to rage about what not having had a nuclear family had done to them."

In some cases, especially on college campuses, the identity rage took on irrational, preadolescent forms. Protesters behaved like children having a tantrum, shouting down speakers on campus with different views from their own, crying, chanting, screaming, or taping their mouths shut as if they were the ones being silenced rather than doing the silencing.

Shorn of identity rooted in family, argues Eberstadt, young people adopted alternative nonfamily identities as ways of being—defining self in terms of combinations or "intersections" of race, sex, sexual appetite, and "gender"—with some curious results.

In its coarseness, vulgarity, swagger, and belligerence, says Eberstadt, feminism in its latest phase (as in the Women's March) has adopted some of the more obnoxious features of the "toxic masculinity" it deplores. Feminism manifests the "routine re-norming of women toward men"—the message continually given to women that, to succeed, they must behave like men. It's a message that, far from liberating women, traps them in the paradigm of being "failed men."

These, a generation later, are some of the poison fruits of the sexual revolution that we rationalized as being in the interests of everyone. But it was, as much as anything, a revolution in parenthood—in the subordination of children's needs to the desires of adults.

Paul Adams is a professor emeritus of social work at the University of Hawaii and was a professor and associate dean of academic affairs at Case Western Reserve University. He is the co-author of "Social Justice Isn't What You Think It Is" and has written extensively on social welfare policy and professional and virtue ethics.

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

BRIAN CATES



Commentary

It was announced on Sept. 13 that Department of Justice Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz has written a letter to members of Congress, informing them that he has at last completed his long-awaited investigation of matters involving the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC).

For a year and a half, Horowitz and many of the 450 people working in the Office of the Inspector General have been digging deeply into just how the fake Trump-Russia collusion information was used by top federal officials to start law enforcement investigations and intelligence operations against the Trump campaign during the 2016 election.

Specifically, Horowitz has been looking into applications proffered to the FISC to get surveillance of former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page. After all, the title of the forthcoming report is "Examination of the Department's and the FBI's Compliance with Legal Requirements and Policies in Applications Filed with the U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court Relating to a certain U.S. Person."

There is no doubt that the "certain U.S. Person" referred to is Carter W. Page.

In this column, I'm going to make a case as to why this Spygate scandal is far more serious and has done more damage to this country than the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s. But before I do that, I have to remind everyone exactly what Watergate was.

**The Spygate scandal is truly the biggest and most serious political scandal in U.S. history, one that dwarfs Watergate.**

What Happened in the Watergate Scandal?

To avoid putting the country through an impeachment crisis, President Richard M. Nixon resigned on Aug. 9, 1974. Had he not resigned, it was a foregone conclusion that impeachment proceedings would begin against him and his chances of surviving such a vote were exceedingly slim. He faced two articles of impeachment if the process moved forward, and the evidence was damning.

The first article of impeachment against Nixon gets the most attention because it involved his use of the CIA to block the FBI's investigation of the Watergate Hotel burglary.

The much-less remembered second article of impeachment had to do with a recorded conversation Nixon had with his aides in the Oval Office, in which he discussed using the IRS, a federal agency, to give his political opponents "tax problems."

Simply talking about doing this would have gotten Nixon impeached. No evidence ever surfaced that the IRS targeted someone for political reasons at Nixon's behest, but even having been found talking about using the power of a federal agency to go after political opposition was odious enough that it led to its own separate impeachment article.

The legacy media has gotten into the habit of repeatedly asserting that former President Barack Obama's two terms in the White House were remarkably scandal-free. That is a ridiculous assertion to anyone who remembers how scandal-ridden Obama's two terms were, such as how the IRS got caught red-handed playing

# Without Accountability, There Can Never Be Trust in Our Government



(Above) President Donald Trump and Attorney General William Barr arrive in the East Room of the White House on May 22, 2019.

(Below) Carter Page, petroleum industry consultant and former volunteer adviser to Donald Trump during his 2016 presidential election campaign, in Washington on May 28, 2019.

political favorites when it came to awarding or withholding tax exemptions to political groups.

In the present day Spygate scandal, government officials didn't merely talk about using the great powers of federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies against political opponents. Evidence points to them having actually done it.

That's why it can accurately be stated that the Spygate scandal is truly the biggest and most serious political scandal in U.S. history, one that dwarfs Watergate.

Why Spygate Is So Much Worse Than Watergate

The Watergate scandal, at its heart, was about political operatives working on behalf of the Nixon administration (informally known as "The Plumbers") attempting to plant bugs in the phones of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters at the Watergate Hotel, so they could spy on key Democratic campaign communications.

A little-remembered fact is that bugs had been successfully planted earlier; the burglars were returning to plant a new set in the phones because the first set never worked properly. It was during this second foray into DNC headquarters in the middle of the night that they were caught by an observant security guard.

So the Watergate scandal was based on an attempt to spy on political opponents, but no evidence ever surfaced that any successful spying was actually done. The first set of listening devices never functioned, and the operatives were caught while trying to replace them.

That won't be the case in the Spygate scandal, because this wasn't an off-the-books dirty tricks group like The Plumbers running an operation against the Trump campaign. This was the federal government itself, making use of the official agencies of its intelligence and law enforcement agencies and surveillance courts to spy on a political campaign and, then, a presidency.

And it's because this scandal is so much worse than Watergate that the persons responsible for it must be held accountable for their actions.

A Slap on the Wrist Simply Won't Do

The punishment must be com-

mensurate with the crimes committed.

The crimes here amount to a deliberate attempt to subvert the federal intelligence and law enforcement agencies and turn them into political engines of partisan policy to shield political friends and destroy political enemies. After covering up serious crimes committed by their political friends, these key government officials used their offices to manufacture crimes to use as a pretext to investigate and punish their political enemies.

Unless this behavior is punished with the utmost severity, no one will ever be able to place trust in the federal government. The ball of accountability will soon end up in the court of U.S. Attorney General William Barr.

If the big plan of President Donald Trump and Barr here is to fully expose what the Spygate plotters did, but then let them all walk away without any consequences—as some people are claiming—then they are planning to undermine the government they've been entrusted with safekeeping. It would be a stunning dereliction of duty.

Nobody would know better than Trump what it would mean to let all the criminals who tried to sabotage him just walk away. Endless bluster about restoring the rule of law and faith in the institutions of the U.S. federal government would be demonstrated to be nothing but hot air.

And yet, I see comments from many people who are convinced that's exactly what is about to happen. They believe Trump will complain, but in the end, he'll stand by and watch his carefully selected attorney general let them all go.

That betrays a stunning lack of faith in this president and the handpicked people he's placed in charge of these federal agencies.

One promise Trump has repeated many times over the past year is that this kind of scandal can never be allowed to happen again.

Some people have talked themselves into believing that after Trump had months to carefully examine different candidates for the attorney general position following the departure of Jeff Sessions, he somehow ended up making a huge mistake by selecting Barr.

Time and again, the narrative goes, Trump is talked into picking the wrong people for the most crucial jobs. A whole new round of this kind of talk just started up again with former national security advisor John Bolton's recent

departure from the White House.

Trump critics point to how many times people have been shuffled in and out of top jobs in the Trump administration during its 2 1/2-year tenure.

Well, how's the Trump agenda looking so far, both domestically and overseas? Does all this revolving door stuff at the White House translate into a world in chaos? I don't think it does. I think Trump keeps shuffling people around to avoid complacency and because he's project-oriented. Trump doesn't have the usual Washington mindset that once you appoint someone to a position, it's theirs until he leaves office.

There are plenty of people willing to sell the narrative that Trump has no idea what he's doing, and he's being constantly bamboozled by bad advisers and then he's forced into ham-handed personnel changes on the fly, when he's not impotently railing on his Twitter account that nobody working for him will do what he wants.

At this point, almost three years into his first term, you either trust that the president knows what he's doing or you don't.

Restoration of Accountability Is Coming

The Spygate scandal not only dwarfs the Watergate scandal, but it's also the greatest threat to the legitimacy of the U.S. governmental system in the history of the United States.

Our system of government is based upon fair and free elections when voters determine who gets to hold the awesome powers of federal agencies in their hands. The people entrusted with these powers take oaths for very real and significant reasons.

The exercise of powers in these federal agencies must be without partisan motivations or agendas. What happened here were deliberate actions undertaken to subvert the U.S. government, and it violated the very principles upon which our system is established.

After the voters speak, one party is supposed to freely hand over the reins of power to the other party.

Political partisans violating all of their oaths by taking federal powers and turning them to partisan political ends is the kind of thing that will destroy our U.S. system forever.

**This Spygate scandal is far more serious and has done more damage to this country than the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s.**

All safeguards carefully and thoughtfully put into place to prevent exactly what happened in this Spygate scandal were deliberately subverted and corrupted. Simply exposing that this happened and detailing how this happened isn't enough; it wouldn't be nearly enough.

And that is why they must all be held accountable. The punishment must fit the crime. To let them all walk away free as birds would be a mockery of justice.

Trump knows this.

Barr knows this. Which is why I don't think these criminals will be allowed to walk away.

Justice is coming.

Brian Cates is a writer based in South Texas and author of "Nobody Asked For My Opinion ... But Here It Is Anyway!"

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



AFRICA STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK



# The Perils of Words When Used for Character Assassination

QUIST CCA-SA 4.0 INTERNATIONAL VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS





**WILLIAM BROOKS**

*Commentary*

There is little doubt that across Canada and the United States, men and women who identify as conservative are feeling more and more uncomfortable about expressing an opinion.

The left views this as a good thing. Conservatives, they say, harbor views that are inherently racist, xenophobic, misogynistic, and homophobic, and they have no legitimate place in the public square. This is not a new disposition for our progressive brothers and sisters, but in the era of Donald Trump, it has assumed a particular intensity. Hardly a month goes by without the discovery of a new speech crime against another virtuous victim of right-wing supremacists.

In Canada, cases like those of former political strategist Tom Flanagan, psychology professor and author Jordan Peterson, free speech activist Lindsay Shepherd, former United Conservative candidate Caylan Ford, and Conservative Party MP Michael Cooper come to mind. All have been the subject of “gotcha” attacks from the left over recent years.

When the wheels of “social justice” turn procedural, justice is set aside, and the resulting perversion of due process is almost always the same: the perpetrator is charged and convicted in a Kafkaesque court of manipulated opinion. The sentence is loss of reputation, interruption of career, and social isolation. It occurs in workplaces, cultural institutions, and the political arena, and it’s a troubling reminder of the perverse human instinct to seek scapegoats for the resolution of self-inflicted troubles.

**Star Chambers**

During such star chamber proceedings, the surprised accused becomes a stationary target. His or her past actions or remarks are amplified and distorted. Context is ignored. Motives are disparaged, and reasonable explanations are dismissed. Witnesses for the accused are frightened and discouraged. They fear the gathering mob and drift quickly away or deny their relationship with the targeted individual.

The process should be sufficient to disturb even the most cynical observers. But in the prevailing ethical climate, politicians, jurists, community leaders, educators, journalists, and influential entertainers feel entirely justified in going along with useful fictions that scapegoat selected targets and pursue the self-interested ends of those in the dominant culture.

What reasonable people might still rec-

▲ Jordan Peterson at a rally on free speech at the University of Toronto on Oct. 11, 2016.



▼ Jordan Peterson, author of “12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos.”

ognize as truth, the post-modern left calls “social constructions.” They claim that traditional “narratives” generate unfair and oppressive modes of authority and knowledge. So, in progressive culture, there are no longer any facts—there are only interpretations. Interpretations are never proven or disproven by hard evidence; they can only be replaced by other more powerful interpretations.

In the arsenal of cynically ambitious, envious, or resentful social justice warriors, unkind and dishonest words have become the most lethal political weapons of our time.

**Words Are Like Arrows**

An old Jewish teaching compares words to arrows. Once the bow is drawn and the arrow is released, it cannot be returned. American rabbi and author Joseph Telushkin often reminded his readers to resist exaggerating the wrong done by people who provoke our anger. “Words,” he said, “are powerful enough to lead to love, but they can also lead to hatred and terrible pain.”

Telushkin underscores his concern with a 19th-century Eastern European folktale that tells the story of a man who went through a small community slandering the rabbi. One day the man felt remorseful and asked the rabbi for forgiveness. When he offered to make amends with a penance, the rabbi asked the man to take a feather pillow from his home, cut it open, and scatter the feathers to the wind. The man did this and returned to the rabbi to ask if he was now forgiven. “Almost,” the rabbi said. “You just have to perform one last task. Go and gather all the feathers.” “But that’s impossible, for the wind has already scattered them,” the man protested. “Precisely,” the rabbi answered.

Few of us may be capable of taking this lesson to heart. In fact, many of us would have considerable difficulty refraining from hurtful or unfair talk about members of our own families and communities even for 24 hours. Nevertheless, one can’t help looking back to a time when false narratives were restrained by a religious reverence for truth and a compelling empathy for the victims of lies. People intuitively understood that murder is wrong, and “character assassination” is a metaphor for murder.

**Troubled Societies and the Persecution of Scapegoats**

From one generation to the next, we have witnessed a disturbing increase in the tolerance for deception within the dominant political classes of Western nations.

The works of Franco-American philosopher René Girard revealed that when

powerful personal desires for power and influence are conflicted, troubled societies seek redemption through the persecution of scapegoats. Ushered in by a century of progressive education and post-modern drama, our preference for scapegoats has come full circle. It is no longer adversarial critics of Western civilization who are likely to be targeted for abuse by unfair conservatives. Now, it is the friends and supporters of free societies who must watch their backs.

Although partisans from both sides of the political spectrum have made use of character assassination, the spirit of our present age has placed conservatives at a particular disadvantage.

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Conservatives tend to rally around established authorities that embody the continuation of religious, cultural, constitutional, and judicial traditions. The canon they represent celebrates virtues such as religious tolerance, individual liberty, equality of opportunity, economic freedom, personal responsibility, the rule of law, national sovereignty, the value of family, and the sanctity of life. This conservative bias toward ancient truths, established ideas, and foundational laws invites contempt from a liberal culture that believes in perpetual modern progress and personal divinity through science, technology, government, and liberation from all “absolute” moral constraints.

On June 16, 1858, Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate, Abraham Lincoln, said in what became one of the best-known speeches of his career: “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” When reason and compromise fail, almost anything can happen.

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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.*