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Daily Press OPINION

MONDAY, JULY 6, 2015

GOP RACE PLAGUED BY FARCE

Anxiety-ridden GOP masterminds eventually will find a way to solve the Trump Problem. Until they do, however, the Republican Party threatens to become as much of a laughingstock as what David Letterman used to call "that thing on Donald Trump's head."

EUGENE ROBINSON
From the Left

Suddenly, according to recent polls, the iconically coiffed mogul has to be taken ... how, exactly? Obviously it's not possible to take Trump seriously, since there's nothing remotely serious about him or his "campaign," which is nothing more than a reality-show version of an actual campaign. But if his poll numbers are going to place him in the top tier of Republican candidates, he can't be ignored.

Let's call him a farce to be reckoned with. A CNN poll released Wednesday found that Trump was favored by 12 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents nationally, putting him in second place behind dynastic scion Jeb Bush, who was at 19 percent. Other recent surveys showed Trump trailing only Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker in Iowa and only Bush in New Hampshire.

Trump reacted to his rising political status with typical self-effacement and modesty, saying that "politicians are all talk and no action and the American public is ready for a leader with a proven track record of success."

Trump's track record would look a lot better without the corporate bankruptcies, and many critics doubt he's worth anything near the \$9 billion he claims. But let's stipulate that he is a wealthy man who inherited a real estate empire from his father and displayed a talent for both making and losing huge amounts of money.

Let's also stipulate that while Trump can't win the nomination, he can be a significant factor in the race — and not, for the Republican Party, in anything resembling a good way.

Already, he has sent a clear message to Latino voters, whom GOP strategists desperately want to attract. Go away, Trump tells them; put as much distance between yourselves and this party as you possibly can.

In his announcement speech, which was really more of an extended improvised rant, Trump gave a description of Mexican immigrants that was both chauvinistic and xenophobic: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best," he said. "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

When pressed on the subject by CNN's Don Lemon, Trump insisted, "Well, somebody's doing the raping. Don I mean somebody's doing it. Who's doing the raping? Who's doing the raping?"

Who, indeed? Trump will have some free time to get to the bottom of this mystery because his slurs had NBCUniversal, which has aired his reality show "The Apprentice," to sever all ties with him and Univision to announce it will no longer carry his Miss USA and Miss Universe pageants. The Macy's department store chain decided to no longer carry Trump's line of menswear, which was interesting news to me because I didn't know he had a line of menswear.

Hard to imagine that the combed-over-mogul look was ever a big seller.

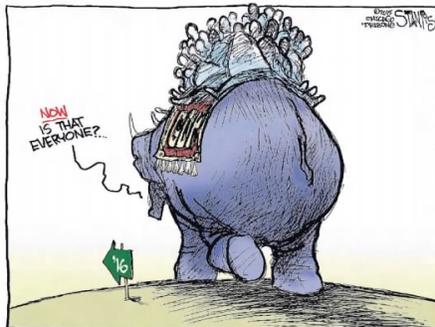
Viewers will tune in to the Republican debates just to see whom Trump insults next. "The Chinese" will come in for a lambasting, of course.

Perhaps he will tell us again what a great relationship he has with "the blacks." Or maybe he will expound on his solutions for the turmoil in the Middle East, which all seem to involve taking other countries' oil.

The one thing Trump can accomplish is to bring the Republican campaign down to his level. A party that allows such a treasury despoiler to lose.

Robinson is a columnist for The Washington Post. Send email to egrobinson@washpost.com.

PUNCH LINES



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ACA working

I read your June 30 editorial "One card to play" three times, but I could not find any examples of the "glaring problems" you claim are embedded in the Affordable Care Act or why you consider it "broken" and "sleepily flawed."

It certainly can't be its much-heralded provisions eliminating pre-existing conditions; eliminating gender discrimination in coverage and premiums; keeping children on parents' coverage; closing the "donut hole" for seniors; or any of the other improvements in health insurance coverage.

These aspects have been widely approved of across the country. I couldn't be that the ACA was "hushed out in the backrooms" that it was passed by those who had not read the bill or that advocates traded favors for votes. Such critics would be aimed at virtually every bill passed by Congress.

If you think it is flawed because it doesn't go far enough, I could agree with you. The ACA basically expands on the concept of getting health insurance through one's employer or on one's own. I would have preferred a single-payer system or Medicare for all.

The Republicans in Arkansas and Indiana are not trying something innovative as much as trying to adopt the provisions of the ACA without giving President Obama any credit. Add work requirements to Medicaid? Most Medicaid goes to children and the elderly, so how would that work? Finally, if the ACA is so flawed, why haven't Congressional Republicans come up with any suggestions for improvements, changes or alternatives?

Yes, the Affordable Care Act is here to stay. And the Daily Press needs to accept it and stop writing misleading editorials about it.

Herbert Erb
Hampton

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

LETTERS: Send letters to letters@dailypress.com, visit dailypress.com/letters, or mail to Letters to the Editor, Daily Press, 703 Mariners Row, Newport News, VA 23606. All letters must include full name, place of residence and contact information (although we only publish name and city). Keep letters short, ideally 250 words. All letters are subject to editing.

Missing candidates

Local political parties seem to have forgotten about the upcoming elections and fielding candidates to appear on the ballot. They must be earning points toward the national election and not focusing on their responsibilities.

Local constitutional officers draw salaries in the six digits. It should not be hard to field candidates interested in these positions.

I would like to exercise my right to vote and would not like to see unopposed candidates. I believe local political party officers should try harder to field candidates and instruct them on the following of dates, etc. If they choose to be lax and not do this, the least they could do is put themselves on the ballot. In fact, it should be criteria for taking the local position in the party office that they field local candidates or file on the ballot themselves.

Rex Turner
Carrifton

Fight air pollution

I'm incredibly frustrated with the June 29 Supreme Court ruling, which nullified the EPA's limits on mercury, arsenic and other toxic air pollutants emitted from power plants. The Supreme Court made this decision because of the EPA's lack of consideration of costs when enforcing these limits under the Clean Air Act.

As a volunteer with the Virginia chapter of the Sierra Club and the Southeast CARE Coalition, I have seen the destructive effects of toxic air pollution firsthand in the Southeast Community of Newport News.

There are the heavily regulated industries in the area, such as the Dominion Coal Terminal. And residents have asthma, bronchitis and other life-threatening respiratory diseases.

I encourage my fellow citizens to take a stand against toxic air pollution by going to

southeastcare.com and signing one of our clean air petitions and/or volunteering for the Southeast CARE Coalition. The Southeast Community depends on us.

Toddy Fotoua
Newport News

Encroaching waters

Hampton Roads is second only to New Orleans in its vulnerability to rising sea levels, mainly because of human-induced climate change.

Although we are beginning to experience the effects of sea-level rise and coastal flooding, very little is being done about it. The June 23 article, "Hampton learning to live with water," discusses the "Dutch dialogues" between city officials from Norfolk and Hampton, and representatives from the Netherlands, a country long at ground zero of the fight against sea-level rise.

It states that, "the goal is to live with water instead of fighting it," and the Dutch offer little other than urgency. Our region is unique, and our solutions will have to be as well, but they won't come cheap.

The Virginia Coastal Protection Act is a good start. It enrolls Virginia in a regional greenhouse gas initiative that will cut emissions, increase energy efficiency and, most importantly, raise roughly \$100 million for Hampton Roads for flooding adaptation.

I urge the Hampton City Council to follow Norfolk's lead in drafting a resolution in support of this bill and the money it will bring to Hampton Roads. As a citizen of Virginia Beach, I hope my City Council does the same.

If there is anything we can learn from the Dutch about living with the specter of sea-level rise, it is that we need to be creative and we need to have the foresight to act now.

Nate Levine
Virginia Beach

THE WORST DEAL IN U.S. HISTORY

The devil is not in the details. It's in the entire conception of the Iran deal, animated by President Obama's fantastical belief that he, uniquely, could achieve détente with a fanatical Islamic regime whose foundational purpose is to cleanse the Middle East of the poisonous corruption of American power and influence.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
From the Right

In pursuit of his desire to make the Islamic Republic into an accepted, normalized "successful regional power," Obama took over the nuclear negotiations. At the time, Tehran was reeling — the rial plunging, inflation skyrocketing, the economy contracting — under a regime of international sanctions painstakingly constructed over a decade.

Then, instead of welcoming Congress' attempt to tighten sanctions to increase the pressure on the mullahs, Obama began the negotiations by loosening sanctions, injecting billions into the Iranian economy (which began growing again in 2014) and concealing in advance an Iranian right to enrich uranium.

It's been downhill ever since. Desperate for a legacy deal, Obama has played the supplicant, abandoning every red line his administration had declared essential to any acceptable deal.

Inspections were to be anywhere, anytime, unimpeded. Now? Total cave. Unfettered access has become "managed access." Nuclear inspectors will have to negotiate and receive Iranian approval for inspections. Which allows them denial and/or crucial delay for concealing any clandestine activities.

To give a flavor of the degree of our capitulation, the administration played Iran's lawyer on this one, explaining that, after all, "the United States of America wouldn't allow anybody to get into every military site, so that's not appropriate."

Apart from the absurdity of morally equating America with the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism, if we were going to parrot the Iranian position, why only 19 months to do so — after repeatedly insisting on free access as essential to any inspection regime?

The current interim agreement that governed the last 19 months of negotiation required Iran to come clean on past nuclear activity. Tehran has offered nothing. The administration had insisted that this accounting was essential because how can you verify future legal advances in Iran's nuclear program if you have no baseline?

After continually demanding access to their scientists, plans and weaponization facilities, Secretary of State John Kerry two weeks ago airily dismissed the need, saying he is focused on the future, "not fixated" on the past. And that we have "absolute knowledge" of the Iranian program anyway — a whopper that his staffers had to spend days walking back.

The administration insisted that the nuclear talks would not affect separate sanctions imposed because of Iranian aggression and terrorism.

That was then. The administration now is leaping that everything will be lifted.

Taken together, the catalog of capitulations is breathtaking: spot inspections, disclosure of "prevailing" nuclear activity, gradual sanctions relief, retention of non-nuclear sanctions.

What's left? A surrender document of the kind offered by defeated nations suing for peace. Consider: The strongest military and economic power on earth, backed by the five other major powers, armed with what had been a crushing sanctions regime, is about to sign the worst international agreement in American diplomatic history.

With every concession, Obama and Kerry made clear they were desperate for a deal.

And they will get it. Obama will get his "legacy." Kerry will get his Nobel. And Iran will get the bomb.

Krauthammer is a columnist for The Washington Post. Send email to letters@charleskrauthammer.com.