

Gateway Journalism REVIEW

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Facts, lies, elections and the press

INSIDE:

The threat Trump poses to the press

Trump can't do everything he wants on Day 1

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4** Facts, lies, elections and the press: In search of a shared national story
- 6** Former leaders of America's top newsrooms dissect Trump victory, look ahead at what's in store for press
- 8** News Analysis: The threat Trump poses to the press
- 10** Media trends complicate Democrats' goal to win statewide races
- 12** Opinion: Election night in a Gen Z newsroom is a reminder of what is at stake
- 13** Opinion: Rebooting the disinformation machine for Trump 2.0
- 14** Opinion: Endorsements are an important cog in the machine of democracy
- 16** Opinion: What went wrong? Missouri women assess Democrats' losses
- 22** Trump can't do everything he wants on Day 1
- 26** Trump's plan to dismantle Department of Education raises questions
- 27** The Redder the Better: Advising student media in red state better for recruitment, motivation and journalism
- 28** 'Journalism Jobs Crisis: A Call to Action' event highlights impact of layoffs on journalists of color, women
- 29** Gen Z Vote: Politics, election results impact relationships after Trump's win
- 31** Gen Z Vote: Harold Washington College students in Chicago reflect on election results
- 32** Missouri's broad redaction law could be blocked as unconstitutional
- 34** Anti-abortion activists want to take Carbondale to the Supreme Court. Here's what we know so far



GREAT MINDS THINK ALIKE

Screenshot of Musk-funded ad linking Trump to liberal icon Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Facts, lies, elections and the press: In search of a shared national story

By William H. Freivogel

"Facts can't fix this."

That was the headline that emerged from a post-election discussion recently at the Berkman Klein Center at Harvard Law School about how the press fell short covering the presidential election.

The point: The press constantly repeating facts and pointing out lies won't stop a man like Donald Trump from building a successful campaign on a foundational lie about the last election being stolen from him.

Fact checkers may annoy people and seem to be talking down to them, said journalists at the Berkman discussion.

Ben Reininga, former head of editorial at Snapchat, said media fact-checkers can contribute to the voters' reaction that "elites" are lecturing them.

"It's almost like some of the institutional markers or the thing that makes a news organization look like a polished news organization have gone from being a [symbol] for trust ... to actually a negative relationship," Reininga said. "People don't trust The New York Times because it looks like The New York Times."

People feel closer to Joe Rogan, the podcasting influencer than A.G. Sulzberger, the Times publisher.

"Facts can't fix this," said Jesselyn Cook, who recently wrote a book about QAnon conspiracy theories. "What social media has done is made it really hard for us to have a

shared reality."

One thing that stands in the way of achieving a shared reality is the economics that govern which social media posts are amplified.

Content creators are paid more by advertisers when posts go viral, regardless of their truth, so creators are incentivized to produce and amplify eye-catching content. False claims often are more eye-catching than truthful ones, studies have shown.

Reininga said, "If you give people an incentive to post a certain sort of content, it is almost impossible to create a moderation infrastructure that will stop them."

Harvard professor Jonathan Zittrain, the moderator of the Berkman discussion, interjected a pithy lesson: "It's the power of incentives and the power of economics," he said. "Markets eat laws or norms for breakfast."

Better understanding voters

The soul searching at the Berkman Center is part of a post-election self-evaluation by mainstream press.

Marty Baron, the much-admired former executive editor of the Washington Post, said shortly after the election that the mainstream media did not understand the voters in the country well enough. "They didn't understand that he (Trump) would win in the voting

segments that he won to the degree that he did among Black Americans, among Latinos, among even women, among, you name it."

Baron added, "I don't think we detected that level of desire for change. I don't care whether we go to a diner or wherever we go. We have to get out into the country."

Meanwhile, two publishers who faced strong media criticism before the election for not publishing presidential endorsement editorials — Jeff Bezos of the Washington Post and Patrick Soon-Shiong of the LA Times — now are taking victory laps. Bezos said his decision not to endorse was the right one even though his editorial page and newsroom rebelled. Soon-Shiong is talking about running bias meters next to editorials and news stories to give "both sides" of a story to the reader. The bias meter would be based on AI technology he has developed in his biotech business. The newsroom is aghast.

Another news organization — ABC owned by Disney — kissed the president-elect's ring by agreeing to pay \$15 million to Trump's presidential library to settle what many lawyers considered an extremely weak defamation case that Trump filed against the station and George Stepanopoulos. The suit related to a jury finding that Trump had sexually assaulted E. Jean Carroll. The network and journalist also agreed to apologize, prompting journalists and lawyers

to predict the capitulation will only encourage more frivolous libel suits.

But Richard J. Tofel, a veteran journalist who writes the Second Rough Draft newsletter, a critique of journalism, says some of the journalistic panic and self-criticism is overblown. "There have been no end of declarations that the relatively narrow second election of Donald Trump heralds some sort of end of the press as we know it," he wrote earlier this month. "Those announcements are vastly overblown, in my view."

Tofel points out that Trump's victory was not the landslide originally portrayed and that studies have found that voters were mostly influenced by their friends and by old-fashioned TV news.

Medill's State of Local News project also found that the places where Trump actually won by a landslide were news deserts without traditional media. It concluded:

“ Donald Trump won the 2024 election with one of the smallest popular-vote margins in U.S. history, but in news deserts – counties lacking a professional source of local news – it was an avalanche. Trump won 91% percent of these counties over his Democratic rival. While Trump’s national popular-vote margin was just under 1.5%, his margin in news deserts was massive. He won these counties by an average of 54 percentage points.”

Message

From: Facebook Ads Team [advertise-noreply@support.facebook.com]
on behalf of Facebook Ads Team <advertise-noreply@support.facebook.com> [advertise-noreply@support.facebook.com]
Sent: 8/12/2017 10:07:52 PM
To: Matthew-John Heimbach [REDACTED]
Subject: Matthew-John, you have a high-performing post

facebook business

Your post is performing better than 95% of other posts on the Page.



Kentucky - Traditionalist Worker Party

Photos from the torch march last night. We will not be replaced!
#charlottesville #virginia #traditionalistworkerparty #tradworker #unitetheright

Boost it now to reach more people.

Boost Post

This email was sent to [REDACTED]. You can unsubscribe or learn more about advertising.
Facebook, Inc., Attention: Community Support, 1 Hacker Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Facebook promotion to boost the traffic of the "We will not be replaced" marchers in Charlottesville, Va. in 2017. Facebook was claiming at the time that it was tamping down the white hate speech.

Trump and Musk: 21st century media celebrities

Nevertheless, historic change is happening in the media and it had an important, if not necessarily decisive, impact on the presidential race.

Trump, with his Truth Social social media company, and Elon Musk, with his ownership of X, bear no resemblance to the Pulitzers or Sulzburgers of news publishing fame. But they are two 21st century media celebrities whose billions and media platforms beam them into the heads of hundreds of millions of people.

Musk – the wealthiest man on the planet, whose SpaceX company owns two-thirds of all satellites orbiting the earth and whose social media account gives him 200 million followers – spent a quarter of a billion dollars to get Trump elected.

Musk spent \$20 million of it on an October campaign where the RBG PAC, named after the liberal icon Ruth Bader Ginsburg, promised pro-choice voters that Trump would not sign a national abortion ban if elected – even though it was Trump's Supreme Court nominee replacing Ginsburg who provided the decisive vote overturning Roe v. Wade.

Musk is one of at least 14 billionaires appointed in cabinet posts and top jobs for the returning billionaire president. The situation is replete with possible conflicts of interest. One possible example of this is the favorable position that Musk is in to obtain future government space contracts from NASA. The new head of NASA paid to take a space walk from Musk's vehicle.

Social media eclipsing journalists?

Musk's X hosts 85% of "news influencers," according to a Pew Research Center report – over three-quarters of whom have no affiliation or background with a news organization. Trump's high-profile interview with Joe Rogan is viewed as an important event in Trump's campaign. It seemed to matter more than Trump's refusal to be interviewed by 60 Minutes or his opponent's interview on that storied platform.

In the end, social media influencers may have a greater impact on voters, especially young ones, than traditional media. This may be a reason the much-predicted GenZ vote didn't favor Harris as much as predicted. Four in 10 voters favored Trump, up from one in three voters in 2020.

A Pew study released after the election showed that one in five Americans regularly gets news from influencers. For those under the age of 30, the number nearly doubles.

People find the social media influencers more personable and relatable than journalists, even though 77% of them have no background in news or connection to news organizations.

Social media influencers contributed to big lies pushed by Trump during the campaign, including his sensational but false claim during the only presidential debate that in Springfield, Ohio, "they are eating the dogs." It didn't take long for real reporters to knock down that claim.

Continued on next page

Musk's X account was also a major source amplifying Trump falsehoods, such as the one about immigrants illegally voting.

Printing press in your pocket

Former President Barack Obama, in a speech this month, exhorted the importance of pluralism and described a "media landscape that would shatter into a million disparate voices." He said Americans have lost the sense of "a common national story or a common national purpose." Without this common purpose, pluralism is difficult because "in a democracy, we all have to find a way to live alongside individuals and groups who are different than us."

Jeff Jarvis, a seasoned journalist and media guru, told a Stanford audience this month that they should not panic about the chaos of the modern media universe.

"We are living through a time as revolutionary, and possibly more revolutionary, than half a millennium ago when the invention of the printing press led to the Reformation and Enlightenment," he said. "The internet, cell phones and artificial intelligence are creating a world few imagined at the turn of the century."

Is the dream turning to a nightmare?

At first, this digital revolution was viewed idealistically as the democratization of communication where everybody could have their own means of sending news, information and opinions to the world. Stories

sent via cell phones by the Black Lives Matter from the streets of Ferguson is an example.

But things didn't turn out as idealistically as enthusiasts had hoped. Hate speech, misogyny and misinformation often dominated the cybersphere. Parents have discovered their teens communicating with imaginary AI-generated "friends" who deepen their children's loneliness. On Telegram, one of the most popular social media platforms in Europe, three-quarters of the channels are run by anonymous providers, some with names like Cartel.

Section 230 of the Communications Act, passed in 1996 to protect the internet in the cradle, did not anticipate the entertaining but often menacing creature as it grew up to titanic size.

Section 230 protects social media companies from being sued for the false and harmful posts of third parties. But it turns out the companies sometimes promote dangerous ones.

When neo-Nazi messages about "replacement theory" and photos of the torch-wielding marchers in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017 attracted Facebook traffic, the social media giant sent a promotion to the Kentucky Traditionalist Workers Party offering to boost viewership for a price. "Your post is performing better than 95% of other posts on the page," Facebook Business told the group in a message that included a button to "boost it now to reach more people."

Cook, the journalist who wrote about QAnon, said, "It's not so much about what we're allowed to say or what we're not, it's

more how this content is treated — what is eligible for monetization and algorithmic amplification. I wouldn't mind seeing a little bit more overly aggressive rules in place for dialing down that amplification and seeing how this content performs on its own without this unnatural boost."

Mark Sableman, a Thompson Coburn media lawyer in St. Louis, agrees Congress should consider removing Section 230 protection for amplification of messages, and for paid messages. The social media company would thus have responsibility where it itself acts to spread the message more broadly, as with the Facebook message in Charlottesville. Sableman notes that brick-and-mortar publishers are legally liable for all that they publish, including the paid advertisements.

No one knows how our electronically supercharged communications revolution will be operating in 5-, 10- or 20-years time. Nor does anyone know what kind of impact it will have on our democracy, which depends on an enlightened citizenry for its survival.

In the media world that Obama sees of a million disparate voices, people and the press should work to find the shared story for a successful democracy.

That shared story will almost certainly be centered around the values that have animated the nation since the beginning and have become more important with time — freedom, equality, pluralism and democracy. With each passing generation these values have become stronger.



Former leaders of America's top newsrooms dissect Trump victory, look ahead at what's in store for press

By Ruth Johnson

The press failed to understand the voters who are returning Donald Trump to the White House, former Washington Post executive editor Marty Baron said.

As in 2016, when Donald Trump was first elected president, "we didn't understand the country well enough," Baron said during a recent conversation with former New York Times executive editor Dean Baquet at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley. "They didn't understand that he would win in the voting segments that he won to the degree that he did among Black Americans, among Latinos, among even women, among, you name it."

Trump won a larger share of Black and Latino male voters than he did in 2020 when he lost to President Joe Biden; his numbers decreased slightly among Black

and Latina women. White votes stayed about the same, with over half their votes going to Trump both election cycles. His gains were primarily among men under age 45, according to AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of more than 120,000 voters.

"I don't think we detected that level of desire for change," Baron said, adding that the press needs to work harder to understand the country. "I don't care whether we go to a diner or wherever we go. We have to get out into the country."

Baquet echoed the need for more reporting around the country, but he said newsrooms are getting noticeably smaller. "I visit newsrooms now that had 500 reporters, and now they have 10, 20 reporters," he said.

Baron said it's a trust problem.

"Most Americans don't even come into

contact with a journalist anymore," he said. "I think that we need to send people around the country more. Not treat people with contempt or condescension. Our job is to explain different parts of the country to each other. We need to support the growth of local journalism."

There has been a loss of over 3,200 local newspapers since 2005, according to Northwestern University's State of Local News Report.

Baquet also identified the diminishing role journalism plays in lighthearted topics like weather reporting and product review as a negative impact on trust in the press. "When I started in journalism we did about 20 things and 18 were non controversial. Now, all the 18 that weren't controversial are gone. You used to go to a paper to know about using an umbrella, or about buying a



Former Washington Post Executive Editor Marty Baron talks with former New York Times executive editor Dean Baquet at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley on Nov. 13, 2024. Photo via Zoom

video game," he said. "The innocent things have gone, all that's left is the things that piss people off."

In a wide-ranging conversation between the two former newsroom leaders on Nov. 13, Baron and Baquet, who is now the editor of the New York Times' Local Investigative Fellowships, warned that Trump's attacks on the press are likely to accelerate once he becomes president again.

Trump "will try every tool that he has, and there's a lot of tools in the toolbox," said Martin Baron who retired as top editor of the Post in 2021.

Trump, who won a decisive victory over Vice President Kamala Harris after a contentious campaign, has long shown disdain for many modern media outlets, critiquing publications any chance he can.

Baron said he is "quite sure" that Trump will go after the press across multiple fronts, one being national security leak claims. "He's salivating to do that. He's talked at rallies about wanting to put journalists in prison for that," he said.

Baron and Baquet produced a list of items they believe Trump will hit once reentering the White House:

- Rescind licenses of network affiliates
 - Classify more documents
 - Deny people access to the interviews and documents that once were available
 - Regularly bring libel and defamation suits for the purpose of harassment and financial strain
 - Demonize the press
- "I don't think you can overstate how

much his relentless attacking of the traditional press, the Post, The Times and others" hurts, Baquet said. "It not only hurts our credibility, it calls into question our deepest reported stories, that we can prove."

The term 'fake news' has soared in popularity since Trump began touting it when he entered the political arena back in 2016. "We can't agree on a common set of facts ... It's worse than that, we can't even agree on what a fact is," Baron said, adding the rise in critique of experts and traditional sources. "That's the goal, to have the public believe that you can never tell what's true or false."

TV "60 Minutes" correspondent Lesley Stahl recalled Trump telling her why he attacked the press so consistently. "You know why I do it? I do it to discredit you all and demean you all so when you write negative stories about me, no one will believe you."

Baron and Baquet talked about media ownership and whether journalism can still have a big impact.

When The Washington Post announced Oct. 25, 11 days before the election, that the paper would no longer publish presidential endorsements, Baron suspected owner Jeff Bezos feared Trump would influence his businesses if they endorsed Harris.

Looking back at the beginning of Post presidential endorsements in 1976, Baron said it was "because it came after Watergate and there was a president who had abused his power and weaponized the

government against his political enemies ... Does that sound familiar to anybody today?"

While editorial boards make decisions about endorsements, other newsroom staff brainstorm engagement strategies.

The Guardian recently announced the paper would no longer post on X, formerly known as Twitter, citing the "disturbing content promoted or found on the platform" as the main reason for their departure.

While Baquet agreed with the decision, saying X owner Elon Musk abuses his control of the platform, Baron did not. "Our role is to be where the readers are," Baron said. "We not only have to do the work, we have to make sure that people see the work and read the work."

As another potential abuse of power, Trump is already trying to circumvent the Senate confirmation process with the appointments he has picked.

"I do not feel that the same barriers to some of the things the Trump administration will want to do exist," Baquet said. "He's already said to the Senate he wants his appointees just to go through."

"The courts have made it clear that they think the president has a tremendous amount of power that previous courts did not think," Baquet said. "But frankly, there is one important guardrail, and that's the press. It's one thing we have to hold on to mightily."

The threat Trump poses to the press

By William H. Freivogel

If President-elect Donald Trump follows through on the threats and actions he directed at the press during the election campaign and his first administration, an already weakened press could suffer further harm over the next four years.

A weaker press, in turn, weakens an important constitutional check on government, one that is especially important when one party controls all the levers of governmental power.

That is the view of media lawyers in Missouri and Illinois.

One lawyer, in a hopeful aside, said Wednesday, Trump's election "was a sad day," but hoped "the vitriol against the media was just political theater."

Trump's vitriol has sometimes seemed like theater delivered off the cuff to amuse supporters — such as Trump mentioning near the end of the campaign that his bullet-proof podium would protect him if someone fired through the press area. "To get me, somebody would have to shoot through the fake news, and I don't mind that so much," he said.

But on election night, the Trump campaign took more concrete steps when it denied press credentials to news organizations that had been critical of the former president — Politico, Axios, Voice of America, Puck and Mother Jones.

In Trump's first term as president, the White House played politics with assigned seats in the White House press room, providing a credential for the Gateway Pundit, the St. Louis-based purveyor of right-wing conspiracies, such as the false claim about ballot boxes being stuffed in Georgia in the 2020 election.

The Project 2025 document prepared by the Heritage Foundation as a blueprint for a Trump presidency suggests that the White House is getting crowded and that the "new Administration should examine the nature of its relationship between itself and the White House Correspondents Association," which normally makes these decisions. The Heritage document suggests the administration "consider whether an alternative coordination body might be more suitable."

During his first term, Trump frequently criticized Jeff Bezos, the Amazon CEO whose Washington Post published prize-winning investigative stories on Trump. Trump threatened Bezos about Amazon and tried to get the postal rates raised.

Trump also intervened to keep Amazon from getting a \$10 billion cloud computing contract from the Defense Department. In 2017 Trump's Justice Department, at his behest, tried to block a merger between AT&T and TimeWarner because he was mad at CNN coverage. During the just-concluded campaign, Trump complained about the fact-checking by Disney-ABC moderators at the presidential debate and told Fox "They ought to take away their license." Political disagreement is not a reason to take away a broadcast license, the FCC responded.

Significant dangers

Mark Sableman, a partner at Thompson Coburn and long-time media lawyer, wrote in an email about the impact of the Trump win on the press: "two significant dangers come to my mind: intimidation of the media, and weaker judicial support for the media's First Amendment protections in practice.

"Trump will try to intimidate the media. We know that, and of course other presidents have tried too, including most notably (Richard M.) Nixon. But it is particularly worrisome today because the professional news media is financially weak, and because some media owners have shown that they are susceptible to intimidation. Bullies are encouraged when they sense weakness."

Sableman said he thinks the New York Times v. Sullivan decision, making it hard for public officials to win libel judgments, probably won't be revised despite Trump's criticism, which dates back to his first term.

"I personally doubt that the Thomas-Gorsuch attack on Times v. Sullivan will succeed in getting that key precedent overturned," he wrote. "But many Trump-appointed judges seem to look to the Court's extreme right for signals. Knowing the Thomas-Gorsuch position (against Sullivan), loyalist Trump judges may hesitate or even refuse to enforce Sullivan or other current media First Amendment protections. Media rights on paper don't mean much if judges in particular cases won't timely enforce them."

Greg Magarian, the Thomas and Karole Green Professor of law at Washington University, also cited Trump pressure on broadcast licenses and on the Sullivan libel decision as areas of concern.

He added, "Trump's victory has multiple negative implications for the press and

press freedom. Most obviously, Trump has deep contempt for the truth and for efforts to report on reality. He and his movement are a cancer of misinformation and disinformation.

"On a policy level, Trump has made multiple threats against press freedom, from eviscerating New York Times v. Sullivan to seizing licenses of broadcasters. All of this is grounded in his ego rather than in any deep policy vision, but he will have plenty of enablers and henchmen with more fully formed ideological commitments to attacking the press.

"We still have some guardrails, like principled judges and regulators, who will block some of Trump's abuses, and of course the press knows how to raise its voice. But 'the press' gets more diffuse and disaggregated every day, which exacerbates news organizations' vulnerabilities. In addition, this election represents a win for the worst elements of the news media: propaganda factories like Fox News and Newsmax. As with Trump himself, these outlets are more venal than principled. For now, they have strong evidence that their sludge sells, and they will only make it more rancid."

Suing 60 Minutes, Woodward and Pulitzer Prizes

Recent events heighten concerns about Trump threatening libel suits to silence critical media.

ABC, owned by Disney, agreed this month to pay \$15 million to Trump's presidential library to settle what many lawyers considered an extremely weak defamation case that Trump filed against the network and George Stepanopoulos. The suit related to a jury finding that Trump had sexually assaulted E. Jean Carroll but had not met the state's criminal definition for "rape." The network and journalist also agreed to apologize for using the term rape even though a judge said the assault on Carroll amounted to rape.

Judge Lewis A. Kaplan said, "The finding that Ms. Carroll failed to prove that she was 'raped' within the meaning of the New York Penal Law does not mean that she failed to prove that Mr. Trump 'raped' her as many people commonly understand the word 'rape.'...Indeed, as the evidence at trial recounted below makes clear, the jury found that Mr. Trump in fact did exactly that."

Media critics reacted to the ABC capitulation as an attempt to protect corporate interests and an incentive for Trump to take more aggressive action against the media.

He did that two days later. At a press conference on Dec. 16, Trump talked about suing "60 Minutes," Bob Woodward and the Pulitzer Prizes. He also said he would sue The Des Moines Register for publishing a poll from the legendary pollster Anne Selzer that turned out to underestimate his support.

He criticized the Pulitzer Prizes awarded the New York Times for its investigation of Russian interference with the 2016 election saying, "They got it absolutely wrong. And now everybody admits it was a hoax. And I want them to get back, take back the Pulitzer Prizes, and pay big damages...They have no excuse for it. They gave a Pulitzer Prize to writers that got Russia, Russia, Russia wrong."

Informed citizenry

Joseph E. Martineau, a member at LewisRice, has represented the St. Louis Post-Dispatch for decades. "I have represented media entities for 40 years," he wrote, "and while I do not always agree with what they write and say, I am thankful that they, like the rest of us, are free to express themselves. More importantly, facts are facts and actions are actions, and while those in politics may not always be happy with the reporting of those facts and actions, it is crucial that an informed citizenry be aware of them and allowed to act in peaceful fashion on them. Stifling the media or telling it what it must report or not report is not consistent with a free society such as we have in the United States but represents the philosophy of tyrannical regimes."

In the first Trump administration, a steep tariff on newsprint from Canada raised the cost of printing daily papers. Donald M. Craven, lawyer for the Illinois Press Association, says it was felt by papers big and small, causing a number to cut back on how many days a week they delivered. "Imposing an additional cost on newspapers, at a time when the industry is already under great stress, is not a great idea." Craven wrote in an email. A U.S. trade commission overturned the tariff, finding U.S. companies hadn't shown they were harmed.

Espionage and confidential sources

Trump has suggested in strong language that judges should use unpleasant jail conditions — jail rapes — to force reporters, editors and publishers to disclose confidential sources.

In 2022 he said at a Texas rally, "When

this person realizes that he is going to be the bride of another prisoner shortly, he will say, 'I'd very much like to tell you exactly who that was,'" Later in Ohio he added, "The publisher too — or the top editors" should also receive that kind of treatment.

Project 2025 concluded, "The Department of Justice should use all of the tools at its disposal to investigate leaks and should rescind damaging guidance by Attorney General Merrick Garland that limits investigators' ability to identify records of unauthorized disclosures of classified information to the media."

Garland had issued protective guidelines after it was disclosed Trump had ordered the surveillance of eight reporters from the Washington Post, New York Times and CNN as part of more than 334 leak investigations.

The Trump administration became the first in history to file criminal charges under the Espionage Act against a self-described journalist, Julian Assange, publisher of WikiLeaks. Recently Assange pleaded guilty as part of a plea-bargain.

Confidential sources are the lifeblood of reporting, especially in the nation's capital. Congressional aides and government staffers usually won't disclose critical information about the government unless they are speaking on background or off-the-record.

The Supreme Court decided half a century ago that the First Amendment doesn't protect the reporter/source relationship the way the confidences between doctor and patient, lawyer and client or priest and penitent are protected.

Almost all states have some degree of protection for the reporter-source relationship in their laws or court decisions governing state courts. They're called shield laws. But there is no federal shield law for federal courts, which is why the New York Times' Judith Miller spent 85 days in jail for not disclosing that Irve Lewis "Scooter" Libby, former chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney, had been the source of the leak that Valerie Plame was an undercover CIA agent. The 2003 leak was part of Cheney's effort to discredit Plame's husband who had undercut the administration's case for going to war with Iraq.

The U.S. House passed the PRESS Act establishing a national shield law in January, but Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., has bottled it up in the Senate Judiciary Committee, maintaining, the press "has a long and sordid history of publishing sensitive information from inside the government that damages our national security. During the Vietnam War, the New York Times published the Pentagon Papers in an effort to demoralize the American people and turn them against the war effort."

But it was the disclosure of the Pentagon Papers that Cotton refers to that led the Supreme Court to explain the importance of the press as a check to a single party government — Democrats in those days — who had led the country into the Vietnamese swamp. Justice Potter Stewart laid out the role of the press as a constitutional check. He wrote:

"In the absence of the governmental checks and balances present in other areas of our national life, the only effective restraint upon executive policy and power in the areas of national defense and international affairs may lie in an enlightened citizenry — in an informed and critical public opinion which alone can here protect the values of democratic government. For this reason, it is perhaps here that a press that is alert, aware, and free most vitally serves the basic purpose of the First Amendment. For, without an informed and free press, there cannot be an enlightened people."

Plans for NPR and Voice of America

Project 2025 has plans for zeroing out federal funds for public broadcasting and removing the journalistic protections from the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe.

As long ago as the Nixon White House, a young lawyer named Antonin Scalia, the same Antonin Scalia who led the rightward shift on the U.S. Supreme Court, called for ending federal support to public broadcasting or be "confronted with a long-range problem of significant social consequences — that is, the development of a government-funded broadcast system similar to the BBC."

Mike Gonzalez, a former Wall Street Journal editorial page editor now at the Heritage Foundation, wrote in the Project 2025 chapter on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting that, "Every Republican President since Richard Nixon has tried to strip the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) of taxpayer funding... All of which means that the next conservative President must finally get this done and do it despite opposition from congressional members of his own party if necessary. To stop public funding is good policy and good politics."

The U.S. Agency for Global Media, which oversees the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Radio Martí, acts as a firewall to protect the journalistic integrity of those news sources. But Project 2025 report sees the firewall as an instrument of left-wing propaganda. It says: "Often, the 'firewall' is touted when journalists are either promoting anti-American propaganda that parrots adversarial regime

Continued on next page

talking points or promoting politically biased viewpoints in opposition to the VOA charter.”

Instead, the agency “should report to the President and coordinate activities with the National Security Council,” to which there should be “clear lines of command.” If that can’t be accomplished, the agency should be “defunded and disestablished,” Project 2025 states.

Trump elevated concerns about the VOA by announcing this month he intended to name Kari Lake to run it. Lake, who has lost races for governor and senator in Arizona, is a prominent election denier. Trump said, however, in his news release that she would “ensure that the American values of Freedom and Liberty are broadcast around the World FAIRLY and ACCURATELY, unlike the lies spread by the Fake News Media.”

Section 230 and social media

Brendan Carr, an FCC commissioner appointed by Trump, wrote the Project 2025 report on the FCC and calls for legislation that “scraps” Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. That 1996 law gives social media legal immunity from being sued for the billions of third party postings that fill their space everyday.

Carr wrote: “Congress should (ensure) that Internet companies no longer have carte blanche to censor protected speech while maintaining their Section 230 protections.”

Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey made that argument in the U.S. Supreme Court last year and had his hat handed to him. Bailey and Missouri’s two U.S. Senators — Republicans Josh

Hawley and Eric Schmitt — claimed that social media companies and the Biden administration were involved in the greatest infringement of the First Amendment in history when false and dangerous social media posts are taken down — posts with vaccine conspiracy theories, Trump’s notion that injecting bleach might help treat Covid and election lies peddled by Trump after he lost the 2020 election.

The Supreme Court’s 6-3 majority, which included conservative justices, told Missouri it didn’t have legal standing to sue and that government officials don’t violate the First Amendment by pointing out to media companies that dangerously false information is posted on their sites.



Media trends complicate Democrats’ goal to win statewide races

By Robert Koenig

Democrats hoping to break the Republican lock on Missouri statewide races are likely to face a daunting media landscape of news silos, “news deserts” and a decline in newspaper endorsements in the years ahead.

In November, every statewide Democratic candidate lost by a substantial margin to his or her Republican opponent — even though the Democrats were endorsed by the state’s two largest newspapers — the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Kansas City Star — and had the advantage of backing the abortion amendment that voters adopted.

While those results did not come as a surprise, several factors related to the media complicated the Democrats’ challenge, and are likely to continue to do so in the next statewide elections. Those factors include:

The increasing power of digital “influencers” in politics

The Pew Research Center says one in five Americans got much of their news in 2024 from digital influencers. That survey focused on influencers who have more than 100,000 social media followers, including both liberal and conservative personalities.

About half of the influencers that Pew sampled claimed to have no political orientation. But a majority of the other personalities identified as conservative. About 63% of those influencers are men, most of whom — including former comedian Joe Rogan — have had no experience with a

media organization.

Exit polls indicated that the male vote in November tilted strongly toward Republicans, complicating the media messaging of Democrats.

The shrinking of the state’s newspapers

Mark Maassen, executive director of the Missouri Press Association, said there are now 203 newspapers in Missouri, down from about 300 papers a decade ago.

In its 2024 “State of Local News” report, Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism found that “the loss of local newspapers is continuing at an alarming pace, deepening the local news crisis and further depriving people of information they need to make informed decisions.”

That trend could be bad for the state’s Democratic candidates because some studies indicate that voters who regularly read newspapers tend to vote Democratic.

Missouri reflects a wider trend, with the nation losing more than one-third of its newspapers in the last two decades. “With 127 newspapers closing in the past 12 months — nearly two and a half per week — the U.S. has now seen a decline of 3,300 since 2005,” the Medill study found.

A poll by the left-leaning Data for Progress suggested that Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris led among voters who said they paid attention to the news “a great deal” or “a lot,” while former President Donald Trump won by decisive margins among those who paid

attention “a moderate amount,” or “a little.” Trump won those who don’t pay attention at all by 51 to 32.

Rob Todaro, communications director at Data for Progress, told the GJR that the analysis “primarily focused on digital outlets that speak to news polarization.” He said the survey did not include newspapers, although “a significant percentage would likely select local newspapers.”

An NBC News poll (conducted in April, before President Joe Biden dropped out of the race) indicated that Biden was the choice of people who got their news from newspapers by 70 to 21%. Trump was winning among those who don’t follow political news by 53 to 27%.

The “silo” effect, limiting exposure to opposing points of view

Russ Carnahan, the former U.S. Representative who now chairs the Missouri Democratic party, worries that voters are often trapped in separate news “silos,” making it difficult for candidates to break through with a different message,

That tendency complicates the campaigns of Democrats in Republican-leaning “red” states such as Missouri, where many voters get their news from Fox News, other conservative channels or right-leaning influencers.

The silo effect also makes it tougher to counter disinformation, which influences state voting patterns even if the issues are national. Some Missouri Democrats



Illustration by Steve Edwards

have toyed with the concept of a weekly or monthly online publication that would aim to counter such false claims at the state level. But such publications might have trouble penetrating voters in conservative news silos.

While he is open to various ways for Democrats to get out their message in such silos, Carnahan suggests that the most effective option would be to recruit like-minded opinion leaders in rural areas or small towns – such as local teachers discussing education, local docs on health care, local judges or lawyers on legal issues.

The waning power of editorial endorsements

The Democratic candidate for Missouri attorney general, Elad Gross, lost by about 19 points even though he was strongly endorsed by the state's two biggest newspapers, which have lost readership and influence in recent years.

"I'm not sure what impact newspaper endorsements have these days," Gross told the GJR. "More and more people are getting their information from other sources."

Maassen of the Press Association said "many newspapers in Missouri are moving away from political endorsements," although there are "a few locally owned

newspapers where the publisher writes a weekly column."

At the same time, many U.S. newspapers that used to be independent or family-owned now belong to large newspaper groups. Those owners, in many cases hedge funds or private equity groups, often tell editors to avoid making endorsements in presidential races.

The Post-Dispatch, owned by Iowa-based Lee Enterprises, endorsed Harris and mainly Democratic candidates for statewide office. But the McClatchy news group, now owned by Chatham Asset Management, told its 29 newspapers, including the Kansas City Star, to refrain from endorsing presidential candidates unless their editorial boards had interviewed both nominees. Even so, the Star endorsed mainly Democratic candidates in state races.

Maassen said the corporate ownership trend is continuing in the state. Recently, Carpenter Media Group and CherryRoad Media acquired newspapers in Missouri, buying them from smaller media groups.

Nationally, Tribune Publishing and MediaNews Group, both owned by Alden Global Capital, said their more than 68 daily and 300 weekly papers would no longer endorse presidential candidates. And Gannett's more than 200 daily papers

– including the Springfield News-Leader and Gannett flagship USA Today – did not endorse presidential candidates this year, although the News-Leader did endorse state and local candidates..

The Spread of "News Deserts"

In another indicator of how local news impacts elections, the Medill project reported that Trump won 91 percent of the vote in "news desert" counties, which lack a professional source of local news. The study found four such counties in Missouri and four in Southern Illinois.

The Medill study concluded that "local news deserts are spreading. A furious pace of mergers and acquisitions is underway, as many longtime newspaper owners bail, and regional chains capitalize on opportunities."

While they are not quite news deserts, many counties – including some mainly rural ones in Missouri and Illinois – offer extremely limited sources of local news. The Medill study found that the number of counties with only one news source is now about 1,563.

"Taken together, those counties include nearly 55 million people with limited or no access to local news," Medill concluded. "More than half of the nation's 3,143 counties have little to no local news."

Election night in a Gen Z newsroom is a reminder of what is at stake

By Jackie Spinner

The day before the Nov. 5 election, I carried a bundle of poles into the newsroom of the Columbia Chronicle in an attempt to recreate one of my core memories from The Washington Post, where I was a staff writer for 14 years.

I made signs for the seven swing states we'd be watching on election night, and I placed them on the poles around the newsroom where the reporters could cluster as they watched the returns come in. We also rallied our alum and journalism allies to contribute to a pizza fund so we could also observe that tradition.

For many journalists, election night is sacred. Like voting, it's a participatory part of the democratic system. After months of reporting, of digging into the platforms of candidates, of trying to understand the voting choices people will make, after watching the numbers and anticipating how close a race will be, election night brings it all together. We get to see the winners we have to hold accountable after they are elected and take office. We do that on behalf of a public that is increasingly reluctant to allow us that sacred, protected duty.

As the faculty advisor to a diverse newsroom of Generation Z journalists, I spend a lot of time thinking through and sometimes reconsidering the rules and conventions I was taught to embrace as a young reporter in a white, patriarchal industry.

Some of the standards are non-negotiable. To earn trust, journalists have always and will always need to protect their credibility. Our coverage is driven by facts. We separate news and editorial and resist sharing our personal opinions in a public forum. Our duty is to our readers and not our owner, which, in the case of a financially dependent student newspaper, is Columbia College.

We spend a lot of time talking about our paper as an institution and why we do the things we do. I do this because my students and their peers are deeply committed to inclusion and equity, and that was not a core value taught to most journalists my age. Our notion of fairness was to "get both sides," a false equivalency I now warn my student reporters not to do. I was decades into my career before I learned to embrace Maynard's Fault Lines and purposefully seek people who didn't share my experience and to include them in my reporting.

In many ways, the newsroom I grew up in was filled with privilege. It was majority white. People were highly educated. I was an outlier because I had gone to state schools and not the Ivy League. I also had grown up solidly working class. But even if for those of who didn't come from money, working at The Washington Post meant you could earn a decent living. And no matter who got elected, you were most likely to be part of a protected class. You'd end up okay. It was easy to focus on the rest of the nation.

That's not the case in the newsroom where I now advise and teach. We have students from nearly every marginalized group in America. We have trans students and students whose parents are undocumented. We have students who were unhoused at some point, students who have limited access to health care and students who are Muslim. Nearly a third of the staff is Hispanic. Many are working two jobs to pay for school at a college that is majority queer and BIPOC.

They have opinions and dreams, and even if they work hard to be objective in their reporting, election night is not objective.

As they came back to the newsroom in the rain after reporting, I watched their faces as they took in the election map and saw how well Republican candidates and former President DT were doing. Putting aside their journalism credentials, many of them saw him and see him as a threat, which is understandable. They watched and reported what he said on the campaign trail. They took him at his word that if elected, he would do all of the things he promised:

- Undertake the largest mass deportation of undocumented people in U.S. history
- Cut climate regulations
- Use the new immunity granted by the U.S. Supreme Court to go after his political opponents
- Be a "dictator" on his first day in office
- Help end the brutal war in Gaza on Israel's terms

In the early hours of Nov. 6, when it became clear that Trump had won, I did two things: First, I helped the student reporters get the story out, and then, along with our bilingual faculty advisor, Fernando Diaz, I sought to reassure them.

Diaz shared an opinion piece from Post columnist David Von Drehle about his late wife and their love story and what she'd make of the sharp turn on election night, when we began to see that America has chosen Trump again.

I decided to tell them what I had told my three young Black sons, immigrants from a Muslim country.

"Be brave," I told them just before 6 a.m. in our newsroom Slack channel. And then a little bit later, "as soon as your eyes flutter open and you process and absorb the news, we need to get to work. Channel whatever you are feeling into turning on your flashlight and shining it brightly. That is our job. That is what we can do."

Rebooting the disinformation machine for Trump 2.0

By Jeffrey Layne Blevins

It looks like America is going back after all. Since the Democratic convention in August, Vice President Kamala Harris often declared, “we are not going back,” as a reference to the many ills of Donald Trump’s first term in office, which saw a woefully mismanaged response to a global pandemic, the Big Lie about election fraud, a failed insurrection, two impeachments, as well as numerous other controversies.

So, what exactly are we going back to? On the campaign trail, the Republican candidate threatened mass deportations of so-called illegal immigrants and political opponents. Trump’s behavior was often crass and unbecoming of any elected official, let alone a U.S. president, like when he simulated fellating a microphone at a rally in the final stretch of his campaign.

However, Trump’s more recent inflammatory rhetoric, threats, and vulgar conduct are less worrisome than what his second administration will mean for our news and information environment. We are going back to an ethos of fake news and media distrust that will be worse during Trump’s first term in office. And if you don’t think it will be that bad again, you can hold Elon Musk’s beer.

Trump rode into office in 2016 on a wave of fake news on social media generated by Russia’s Internet Research Agency. At the same time, Trump was calling legacy news media outlets “fake news” and the “enemy of the people” for any reporting that reflected his administration in a negative light.

Since Musk, a Trump acolyte who campaigned with him during the final weeks leading up to the election, has taken over Twitter and transformed into X, we should expect to see more content in our X feeds that unfairly disparages democrats and Trump’s political rivals on social media. During the stretch run of the campaign this year, outrageous claims emerged on social media platforms that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio were stealing and eating people’s pet dogs and cats. There were also patently false allegations that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the Biden administration was seizing property from victims of hurricane Helene.

Of course, we should also not forget widespread claims of voter fraud, echoing Trump’s preemptive assertions that illegal immigrants were somehow being shipped into the U.S. by Biden (and then Harris) to vote for democrats. The irony should not

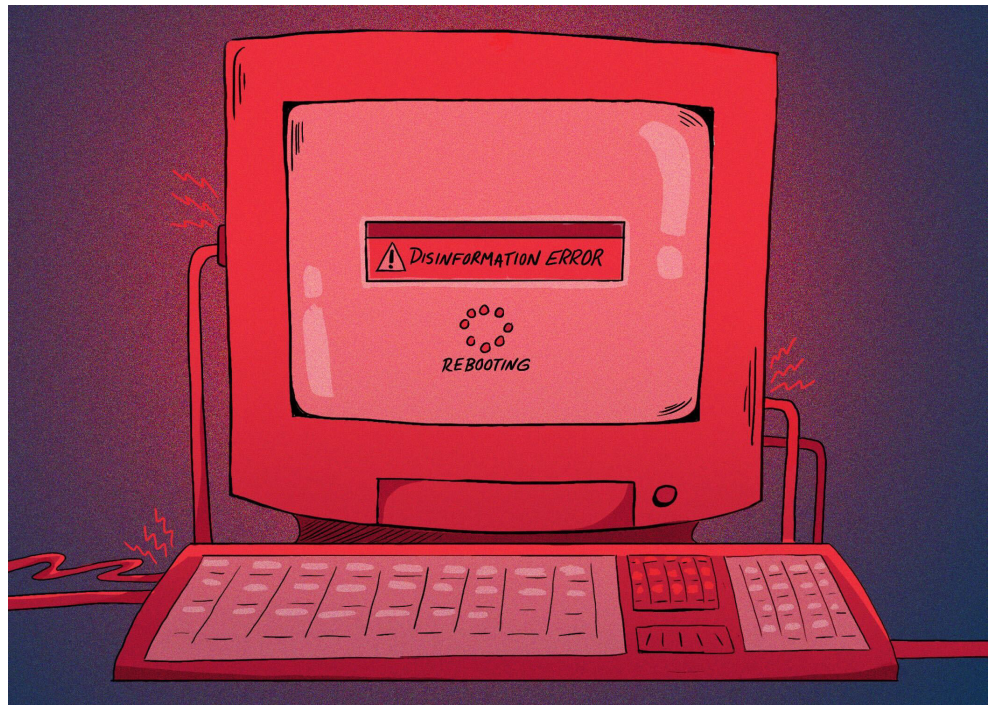


Illustration by Kailey Ryan

be lost on us that Trump’s centerpiece grievance suddenly vanished on election day when it began to look like he could win on votes alone. For Trump and his MAGA culture, voter fraud only happens if you lose.

What is different from fake news during the 2016 election campaign is that these kinds of disinformation campaigns are home grown and further reinforce potent cultural narratives. What journalists, especially political reporters, need to prepare for over the next four years is how to report on such culturally charged allegations. It is a common journalistic norm to focus reporting on the victims and the least powerful, rather than the perpetrators and the powerful. We do this for good reason. Legal immigrants to the U.S. suffered threats and disparagement because of online disinformation. Hurricane victims may not have sought relief from FEMA over baseless fears that the agency would seize their property. Certainly, these stories deserved to be told.

But fellow journalists should also take note that it matters least to MAGAs if disinformation is racially charged, misogynistic, or falsely attacks government agencies. If news media center their reporting on those elements, all that Trump supporters will hear is that you are calling them racist or bigoted for believing such claims. For that matter, journalists might

also consider the targets of disinformation campaigns, mainly the political right, as victims to a lesser degree. Their consumption of this content has cultivated a distrust in fundamental democratic institutions and processes.

Instead of emphasizing the nature of the lies, it would behoove journalists to focus on the liars. Who is making this false claim and how would they benefit from its spread? Other than the Big Lie about a rigged election in 2020, Trump is usually not the originator of false claims even when they benefit him politically.

What makes disinformation spread on social media so politically powerful is the commercial nature of algorithms that are programmed to keep users engaged by putting content in front of them that they respond to by minutes watched, likes, shares, and comments. And what keeps the political right engaged – cultural content that plays on the worst of their fears and emotions.

And think again about who would benefit from the production, dissemination, and belief of such inflammatory content, whether it attacks immigrants or undermines federal agencies, or trust in the institution of journalism. What might be Musk’s deeper motivation for acquiring Twitter and actively campaigning for Trump?

Endorsements are an important cog in the machine of democracy

By William H. Freivogel

The purpose of a newspaper endorsement of a president or other political candidate is to pull together information about the candidates, measure the candidates against the news organization's and the nation's values, and then cogently explain to readers/voters why a particular candidate deserves their vote.

That's why my decade of writing scores of political endorsement editorials for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch left me believing that newspaper endorsements play an important, if poorly understood, role in democracy.

The Washington Post's decision not to publish its planned endorsement of Kamala Harris is an abdication of civic responsibility by one of the nation's great papers. In a word, it is gutless.

The announcement that there would be no presidential endorsement came from CEO Sir William Lewis. Lewis' appointment as publisher earlier this year resurfaced a scandal involving his alleged role in covering up the phone hacking scandal of Rupert Murdoch's London tabloids a little more than a decade ago. Scotland Yard announced at that it was considering reopening the criminal investigation into the 2011 hacking at the end of July.

In his written explanation of the endorsement decision, Lewis attempted to dress up the decision as "returning to our roots." The problem with the argument is that the Post has endorsed for president in every election since Watergate when reporting led to the end of Richard M. Nixon's presidency. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein blasted Lewis' decision on X, writing: "We respect the traditional independence of the editorial page, but this decision 11 days out from the 2024 presidential election ignored The Washington Post's own overwhelming reportorial evidence on the threat Donald Trump poses to democracy."

Marty Baron, the former executive editor who led its Pulitzer Prize winning coverage of Trump, said on X, "This is cowardice, with democracy as its casualty," 11 Post columnists, led by veteran Ruth Marcus, also criticized the last minute decision.

Lewis' claim that the Post had decided to return to its roots nine days before the election was widely rejected as a ridiculous last-minute fig leaf.

Standing in the voter's shoes

For 10 years I wrote just about every political endorsement published by the Post-Dispatch, from mayor and state representative to governor to senator to president.

None of us at the Post-Dispatch had delusions about our editorials changing enough votes to influence the outcome of an election. Sometimes we wondered out loud if our endorsements of mostly liberal candidates helped the conservatives win.

As journalists, we had a front row seat to observe the people who sought our vote. We had this front row seat because of the role the press plays under the First Amendment and because our readers deserved to hear what we saw and heard while we stood in their shoes and watched the political process unfold.

It was sometimes hard to convince readers that the editorial page did not control the news coverage, but it didn't. Editorial writers often contacted the reporter on the beat to get the inside scoop on a candidate, but never suggested the news coverage should change.

Often, we could provide our most useful advice in local races where voters might not know their state representative but where our reporters had covered those representatives in Jefferson City or Springfield.

Barack who?

An embarrassing anecdote will give you an idea of how this works.

One January morning in 2004, the editorial page secretary told me that a U.S. Senate candidate from Illinois would be arriving in our office around noon seeking our endorsement in the Democratic primary. I had never heard of the man, nor had any of my colleagues. We laughed that a candidate whose name rhymed with Osama would think he could get elected to statewide office in those post 9/11 days.

I pleaded with my colleagues to join me in the interview with the candidate. No one would.

I had an hour-long one-on-one discussion with the man who would become president four years later in what may be the most meteoric rise in history. I was struck by Barack Obama's brilliance. Of course we endorsed him.

That summer he gave the memorable speech at the Democratic National Convention, saying, "There is not a liberal America and a conservative America — there is the United States of America. There is not a Black America and a white America and Latino America and Asian America — there's the United States of America."

When he came back to the Post-Dispatch for our general election endorsement interview, the room was filled with about 25 journalists including the editor and publisher. Obama smiled and turned to me and said, almost in a whisper, "It looks a little different than it did in January."

The point of this anecdote is that we as editorial writers, with an important public trust of sorting out the best candidates, had a lot to learn about Barack Obama. The endorsement process was how we learned it and enabled us to pass along what we learned to our readers, who were hopefully the better for it. If we hadn't been endorsing, we wouldn't have met this young man and our readers would have been poorer for it.

Honest conservative vs. populist huckster

Another example of the importance of the endorsement process was our decision to endorse Republican Attorney General Jim Ryan over Democrat Rep. Rod Blagojevich in the race for Illinois governor.

In contrast to the Obama endorsement meeting, everyone on the editorial page wanted to see Blagojevich, and he lived up to his billing. Looking around at the heavily male, middle-aged editorial writers sitting around the big wooden editorial table, he began to run down the starting lineup of the 1964 St. Louis Cardinals baseball team. The World Champion team was dear to the hearts of the assembled boomers.

But Blagojevich left me and a few of my colleagues with the feeling we had just been visited by a traveling patent medicine peddler.

I had written strong editorials criticizing Ryan for pushing death penalty cases that sometimes resulted in unjust convictions. Ryan, when he came in for an interview, didn't back down from his support for the death penalty. He came across as sharp, honest and knowledgeable.



Jeff Bezos

Photo by Daniel Oberhaus via Flickr

There was much back-and-forth. At one point I was even asked to write a possible Blagojevich endorsement editorial. But, in the end, we didn't trust Blagojevich. The voters didn't follow our advice, but when Blagojevich was convicted and sent to prison, we felt as though the due diligence of our endorsement process had led to good advice to our readers.

Endorsing a dead man

In October of 2000, Gov. Mel Carnahan came in for his endorsement interview. In several sharp exchanges that I later regretted, I pushed him hard on the execution of death row inmates who had a decent argument that they were innocent. Carnahan, whom we generally supported as governor, was visibly angry.

Shortly afterwards, on Oct. 16, we got word that Carnahan had been killed in a plane his son was piloting in a storm.

It was too close to the election to change the ballots, so Carnahan's name remained on it. After some consideration, we decided to endorse Carnahan. Voters elected him over incumbent Sen. John D. Ashcroft, knowing that Carnahan's wife, Jean Carnahan, would be named to the seat if Mel Carnahan came out ahead of Ashcroft.

For many years before 2000, the editorial page and Ashcroft had cordial relations, despite differences. Ashcroft would take off his coat, sit down at the editorial table and tell us why he thought we were wrong.

Unfortunately, by the 2000 election, the cordial atmosphere was gone and Ashcroft wasn't talking to us. The contested election of 2000 didn't help. When President George W. Bush named Ashcroft as his attorney general, we applied our years of covering him to editorials opposing his confirmation because of his poor record on civil rights and civil liberties. He was confirmed.

The process

At Joseph Pulitzer's Post-Dispatch the role of the editorial endorsement process was integral to the newspaper's values expressed in the Platform: "Always fight for progress and reform, never tolerate injustice or corruption, always fight demagogues of all parties, never belong to any party, always oppose privileged classes and public plunderers, never lack sympathy with the poor, always remain devoted to the public welfare, never be satisfied with merely printing news, always be drastically independent, never be afraid to attack

wrong, whether by predatory plutocracy or predatory poverty."

It was our job as editorial writers to find the candidates who best fit these values. We also tried to stay true to long-standing principles that the editorial page had stood for over decades — opposition to Hitler, sharp criticism of the red-baiting of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, early opposition to the Vietnam War, opposition to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, support for civil rights from Brown v. Board through "I have a dream," the Civil Rights Act, Roe v. Wade and same-sex marriage.

What is so shocking about the way news organizations like the Post and LA Times have pulled back on the endorsements when Donald Trump is the only president in history who tried to overturn the will of the voters and could represent an existential threat to democracy in a campaign built on the lie of having won the 2020 election. This is no time for the money counters at America's greatest newspapers to shrink from their public duty.

What went wrong? Missouri women assess Democrats' losses

By Don Corrigan



Jess Piper, a Democrat from northwest Missouri, speaking at the Missouri chapter of the National Women's Political Caucus.

Photo courtesy of Jess Piper

Women who count themselves as Missouri progressives had a rough evening on election night, Nov. 5, after the Harris-Walz ticket went down to defeat in the national election and candidates statewide were blown away by as much as a 20-point margin.

A positive note for an otherwise disastrous election night was voter passage of two progressive measures in

Missouri.

Proposition A hiked the minimum wage to \$13.75 per hour beginning in 2025 and \$15 per hour in 2026. Thereafter, annual adjustments will be based on the Consumer Price Index.

Amendment 3 overturned a near-total ban on abortions in Missouri by a 52% to 48% margin. With passage of the amendment, titled Missourians for

Constitutional Freedom, the state joined more than a dozen U.S. states that have voted in favor of abortion rights.

Three leaders in the progressive movement who worked in the trenches to pass Amendment 3 are: Jess Piper who heads Blue State Missouri; Stacey Newman, who heads Progress Women; and, Karen Francis of Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice.

All three women are elated over the passage of Amendment 3 to counteract the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe protections. All three are deflated to find that Amendment 3 seemed to have no “coattails” to help Democrats rack up some wins in the state.

Dirt Road Democrat

Jess Piper, a tenacious woman activist who has run for office in northwest Missouri, has little patience for election autopsies that point to voter unhappiness with inflation, crime, or border security to explain the election of Donald J. Trump as America’s 47th President.

Piper said she takes issue with barbs aimed at the Democratic candidate, Kamala Harris, for her laugh, or her smile, or her failure to go on right-wing talk shows or her eagerness to embrace supportive Hollywood icons.

She is especially irked by suggestions that Harris did not represent change. She said Harris embodied radical change. The prospect of a Black and a female in the White House simply ignited flames in a tinder box of bigotry, she says.

“Look, I’m 50. I don’t think we will elect a woman president in my lifetime,” said Piper. “My take is that misogyny and sexism is across the board more potent than even racism. After all, voters did give Obama two terms in this country. They’ve defeated two women against a pitiful male candidate.

“That’s not to say racism is not a factor,” added Piper. “But look at the Black males and Hispanic men who gravitated to Trump. Racism appears to be less of a concern for them. They simply prefer a man – even one without character – to a woman.”

By lack of character Piper and other upset women, point out: A jury judged him to have sexually assaulted E. Jean Carroll in what the judge said amounted to rape; he was convicted of having paid cover-up money to a porn star; he said on the Access Hollywood tape “when you’re a star, they let you do it. ...Grab ‘em by the pussy. You can do anything”; he was found by a New York court to have engaged in business fraud; and he falsely claimed he won the 2020 election.

Character didn’t seem to matter and character should have been the number one issue, according to Piper. In 2022, she ran for the Missouri House. She hiked dirt roads and knocked on doors in Nodaway County.

“When I campaigned for the 1st District House Seat in 2022, I was greeted with a lot of vile comments,” said Piper. “As a Democrat, I was told I supported having men in women’s bathrooms.

“I was also told I was not a Christian



Jess Piper on the campaign trail.

Photo courtesy of Jess Piper

for being pro-choice,” continued Piper. “Among the milder comments I received: ‘What if you win? Who is going to stay home and take care of your kids?’

“I listened and I was thinking to myself, You don’t think my husband can take care of our kids? Sir, you don’t have a library, you no longer have a medical clinic, you don’t have shoulders on your roads. I will fight to get these things, but you’ll vote for the other guy, because I am a woman!”

Piper said that Democrats in rural Missouri are always up against powerful forces: first is dominance of FOX News and a lack of media diversity; second is the messaging that comes out of conservative churches; third is the lack of Democratic organization in farm country.

“If Democrats fielded candidates in every rural race, they might not win them,

but they would bring out votes that could help Democrats win statewide,” said Piper. “When Democrats just cede the rural areas to Republicans, they lose the whole state in a big way.”

Piper said there are rural Democrats and libertarian conservatives who can change the color of the state from red to blue. She said that libertarian conservatives read the ballot on Amendment 3 on reproductive choice and voted for it as a matter of personal freedom.

Media and religion

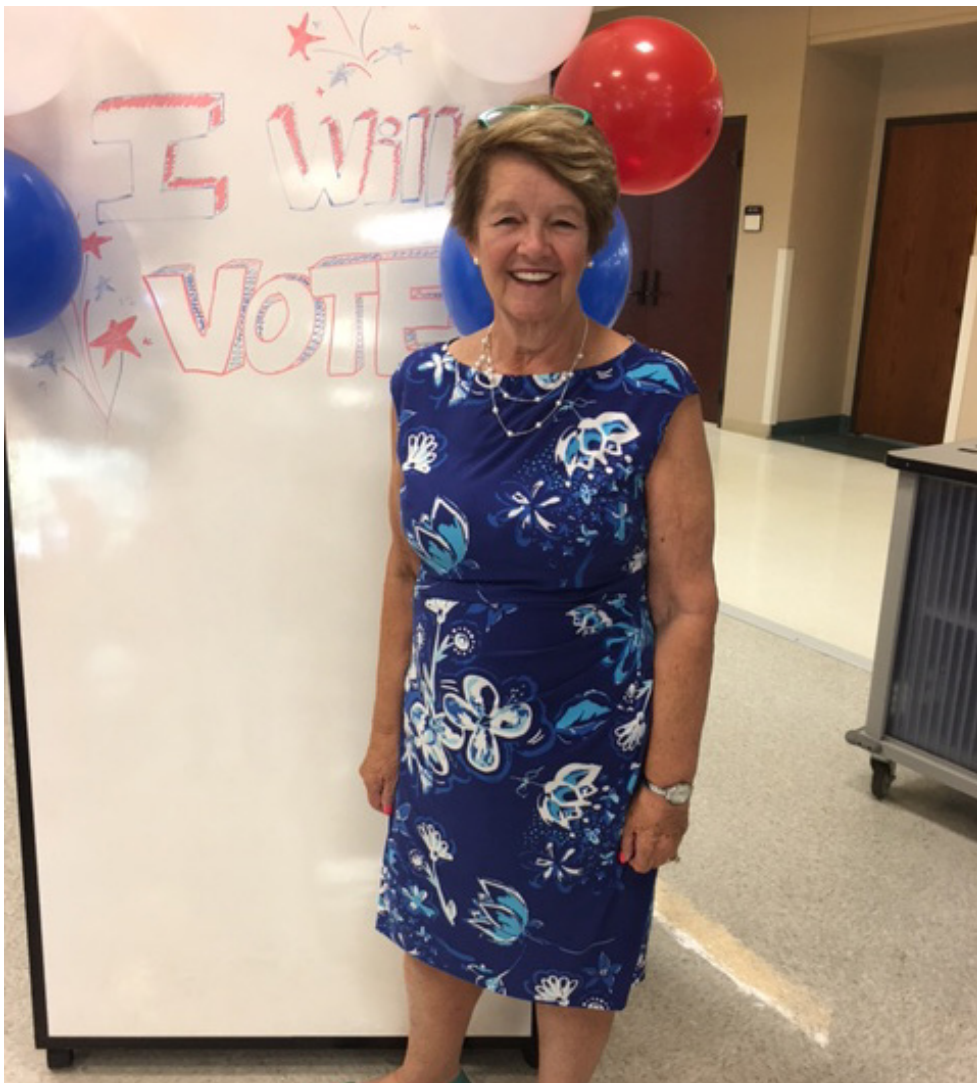
Piper said the only way to begin to loosen the stranglehold of MAGA Republicans on rural Missouri politics is to support alternative media and

Continued on next page



Stacey Newman at abortion rights rally in St. Louis in the summer.

Photo courtesy of Stacey Newman



Karen Francis, executive director of Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice in St. Louis, says the organization focused on combating disinformation and getting out the vote in the 2024 election.

Photo courtesy of Karen Francis

support other religious voices to counter the dominant ultra-conservative fundamentalists.

"The state party leadership also needs to provide the resources to start Democratic Clubs in the rural areas," said Piper. "One of the best such groups in rural Missouri is the Adair County Democrats in Kirksville. That's the model.

"They have a lot of young members in their 20s and 30s. These are Democrats who are going to be around for a while," added Piper. "They communicate on social media and can bring an alternative to the FOX mindset. Young people bring in some diversity."

Another area where diversity could be helpful for Democrats is in the area of religion, according to Piper.

"The fundamentalist churches out here preach against abortion constantly, with occasional prosperity gospel added in," said Piper. "The only time they talk about Jesus and the Beatitudes – to help the poor and downtrodden – is at Easter," she noted.

"Otherwise it's abortion all the time," said Piper. "I do think Democrats should reach out to other churches that are more receptive to the Beatitudes' message of helping the sick, hungry, poor and those in search of justice. There are Methodist, Episcopal, Lutheran and some liberal Catholic churches in rural areas – not just Fundamentalist Baptists."

Piper said Democrats should urge churches to put up billboards with messages about helping the sick, hungry, poor and the poor in spirit. The anti-abortion crusade should not have a billboard monopoly.

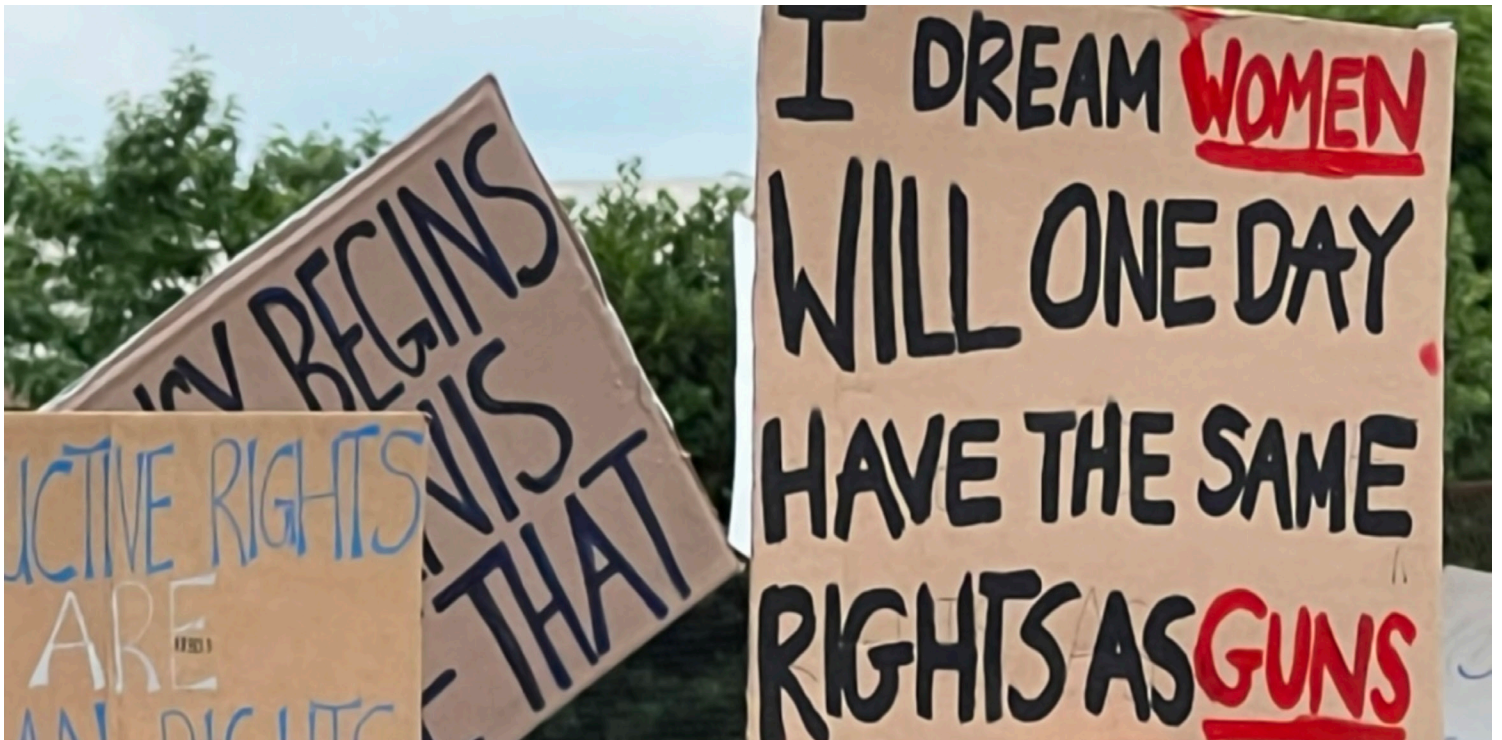
Missouri was the setting for the award-winning movie, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri." The 2017 crime drama was about the impact of billboards calling out the inactivity of local law enforcement in a sexual assault and murder case.

"We need billboards sensitizing people to the issues that Democrats champion, such as food security for school kids or Medicaid expansion for the poor and elderly," said Piper. These billboards need to ask: "What would Jesus do?"

No amendment coattails

Stacey Newman, a retired state legislator from University City and head of Progress Women, has spent much of her time fighting to restore women's reproductive freedom.

Newman and Democrats hoped that Amendment 3 would have coattails, helping to end a MAGA lock on the Missouri legislature, statewide offices and the congressional delegation. The abortion amendment passed, but Democrats were still dispatched to the loser column.



Signs at abortion-rights protest in St. Louis earlier this year.

Trump beat Harris in Missouri by a margin of 58% to 40%. Incumbent Republican Sen. Josh Hawley beat Democratic challenger Lucas Kunce by a margin of 56% to 42%. All statewide offices from the governor on down were lost by Democrats by a roughly 60% to 40% margin.

"Lots of people thought Democrats might finally get a U.S. Senate seat back because Hawley would be hurt by Amendment 3," said Newman. "Hawley has been one of the loudest voices against reproductive rights and Kunce should have had an advantage there.

"But Kunce was not a good candidate," said Newman. "He did not support Kamala Harris at the top of the ticket. He tried to outdo Republicans with his shooting guns, his male bravado, his trying to create a 'bromance' with Missouri men. It didn't work at all."

Newman concedes that there was a major disconnect in the state with voters approving abortion rights, and then approving state Republican candidates intent on nullifying Amendment 3.

"Republicans proved that hate works," said Newman. "You saw it in their ads. Let's beat up on the immigrants. Let's beat up on trans kids. Let's beat up on minorities. Let's beat up on women who refuse second class status.

"My question is: Even if you dislike women, can't you still cast your vote for competency? Do you dislike women so much that you will vote for a man who rambles on about shark attacks, or Hannibal Lecter, or who cannot complete a rational thought?"

Newman said buyers' remorse is already setting in for some pro-Trump women. She pointed to Trump's alarming cabinet nominations, including Matt Gaetz, Pete Hegseth, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Kash Patel and more.

"Democrats should not beat themselves up too much now to find the right strategy and the right slogan against hate," said Newman. "Republicans have lots of potential to just self-destruct – and they can't govern. Midterm elections are just two years away, to start getting things right."

Women's voices raised

Karen Francis, head of the 20-year-old Women's Voices Raised For Social Justice, said she was not at all stunned or shocked by the election of the Republican Trump-Vance ticket on Nov. 5.

"I was not at all surprised," said Francis. "When the polls were still close after months of Trump's language and behavior, well, what does that say? This should not have been a close election and women should have voted against him by a much bigger margin than 60%."

Francis expressed dismay that no sooner had Missouri voters passed abortion rights and a minimum wage in the Nov. 5 election, than state Republicans began to work to dismantle the will of the people on those two issues. They called both measures extreme that needed "some fixing."

Pre-filed bills for the 2025 session of the legislature give details on where abortion rights and a minimum wage increase need "some fixing." What's more

legislators with the GOP House Freedom Caucus have filed bills to effectively gut Missourians' right to vote on policy issues.

"This happens over and over again," said Francis. "Missourians vote for things and then Republicans work to nullify their vote. And it's beyond comprehension that voters who approve good things, then turn around and vote for candidates who will undo the things they voted for."

The disconnect between state voters supporting policies – and then voting for candidates who will destroy those policies – has to be chief among concerns for Democrats, Francis said. She said the party has had more than two decades to get a message across to end this disconnect. They have failed.

Among the issues where Republican state legislators have tampered with the people's will are: gun regulation, right-to-work, green energy, expansion of Medicaid, pot legalization, and now abortion rights and minimum wage.

Francis said there should have been coattails in Missouri on the passage of Amendment 3 that would have resulted in some Democrats being elected. Democrats have failed at making the connection between policy and candidates for voters, all but guaranteeing one-party rule in the state.



Amaya Stief, 22, of Bethalto, demonstrates earlier this year during an abortion rights protest in downtown St. Louis.

Photo by Brian Munoz



Valerie Simone, 24, of Franklin County, center, leads hundreds of abortion rights demonstrators earlier this year while marching on Market Street.

Photo by Brian Munoz

Women must reach out to men to end gender gap politics

By Don Corrigan

After the loss of Kamala Harris and progressive Democrats in the 2024 election, some women activists on the left are advocating a virtual boycott of men. Tactics in a political war between the sexes include saying “no” to dating or having conversations with men.

We have a gender gap now,” said Karen Francis, head of Women’s Voices Raised For Social Justice. “2024 was the gender gap election. We are on a path to see this gender gap become even wider. That will hurt all of us.”

Francis said women need to converse with men to find out why they voted in such numbers for Trump. Did this involve a backlash against women? A backlash against a Democratic Party pegged as primarily a party of college-educated females?

“We need to reassure men that their lives aren’t diminished by progress made by women,” said Francis. “It’s not a zero-sum game. We’re not in a competition where one side gains at the expense of the other.

“We need to talk with men about the pressures they are under and their personal concerns,” added Francis. “We are going to all do better, if we work together. We should not be taking sides in some kind of war between the sexes.”

Republicans did well in the competition for male votes by appealing to a culture of machismo that put down women. Trump was introduced at his Republican National Convention by Dana White of the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

The GOP messaging as the party of males was not subtle. It was as obvious as Hulk Hogan violently tearing off his shirt at the RNC. The Hulk said his convention performance was his “first time to actually stand up and be a man. Not just talk like one, but actually be one.”

Women will never be able to match the macho display for appreciative males as produced by the bare-chested Hulk. However, they can show sympathy for the real problems of men, and champion solutions that benefit both genders, according to Francis.

Francis of Women’s Voices said her organization is very aware of the real problems of men. Those problems include a life expectancy gap in which women live five to six years longer than men. Another such gap involves suicide rates, which are four times higher among men.

Richard Reeves, founder of the American Institute for Boys and Men, says that up to now, male grievance has been exploited by reactionary forces. Reeves argues that Democrats need to become a party of both sexes with solutions that benefit both genders.

Reeves has his own slate of masculine policy issues pertinent to boys and men. These are problems that progressive women should recognize and seek to address together with men. Among the issue areas:

- Education. Boys are falling behind and male role models are missing in education. The share of K-12 teachers who are male has fallen from 33 percent when Ronald Reagan was president to less than 23 percent today. Men need inducements to enter the education field.
- Support for Community Colleges. For men, especially, two-year colleges can provide direction and a solid foundation for careers. Training for jobs would boost male participation in education and employment outcomes.
- Mental Health. A mental health crisis is impacting boys and men. Women and girls are not nearly so affected. Suicide and substance abuse are killing men, yet male health is badly neglected in policymaking. The U.S. government has 29 public health goals for women. There are 4 for men.
- Office for Men’s Health: A Democrat-sponsored bill is already in Congress which would focus on men’s health issues, mirroring the existing Office on Women’s Health. This office would develop programs to address health disparities affecting men.
- Family Matters. Former President Barack Obama noted: “Too many fathers are missing from too many lives and too many homes, and the foundations of our families are weaker because of it.” There is an urgent need for “pro-dad” public policies.
- Equal, Independent, Paid Parental Leave. It is important that both mothers and fathers have access to their own leave, on an equal basis. This can open up an ongoing engagement between fathers and children. It would send a strong message: Dads can be as important as moms in the family.

As the so-called “women’s party,” it’s not surprising that men have turned away from Democrats and are looking in another direction. But Francis said working on behalf of women does not require groups like her own to turn their backs on men.

“We need to reach out to men,” said Francis. “We need to do better by men. We need to let them know it is not a sign of weakness to need help, nor to ask for help. The macho route isn’t working for the majority of men.”



Lecture Center

An "I Voted" sticker placed on a sign outside of a lecture center in the UIC quad on Dec. 4, 2024.

Photo by Nate Bieneman

Trump can't do everything he wants on Day 1

The Constitution, congressional powers and reality may slow him down. But there is still much he can do.

By Emma Jolly

President-elect Donald Trump said he wouldn't be a dictator — "except for Day 1."

He also plans to undertake the largest mass deportation of migrants in U.S. history, reshape the federal government, go after his political enemies and punish journalists.

With a Republican-controlled Congress, Trump can do a lot. The U.S. Supreme Court also significantly expanded presidential powers in July by granting Trump "absolute" immunity from prosecution for actions taken within his core constitutional duties and more limited immunity for other official actions.

So we wanted to know, can he really do that?

Some things were easier than others to answer. For example, Trump has mentioned the idea of running for president a third time more than once. The 22nd

Amendment to the Constitution states that "no person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice." Changing the amendment would have to be ratified by a majority of state legislatures. The last amendment to the Constitution was passed in 1992 and addressed financial compensation for Congress.

But in other cases, the answers to questions were more nuanced.

Robert Watkins, associate professor of political science at Columbia College Chicago, said the Constitution plays a fundamental role in limiting the powers of the presidency by detailing the specific powers and responsibilities of the president as well as ensuring checks and balances with other branches of government.

But what concerns him "is the prospect of a president enabled by a Congress uninterested in checking the power of

the president and a Supreme Court that has recently decided that presidents are immune from prosecution for official acts," Watkins said.

Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin, a journalism professor at Columbia College and the founder of Columbia Votes, said that she aims to provide students with access to information and that she will keep guiding them towards reliable sources.

"Read widely the smart people who are trying to analyze how we got here, and take that seriously," she said. "But also give yourself a break; don't get so immersed in how terrible it is that you're paralyzed."

Can he restrict birth control, IUDs and Plan B?

Birth control has seen a spike of interest since Donald Trump was elected. Thousands of women are stocking up and getting IUDs placed before he takes office.

Trump has said that he has no plans to restrict birth control, and all power relating to birth control will be left up to the states. However, in the past his administration has made moves to make birth control harder to get, including two actions in October 2017 on the Affordable Care Act, former President Barack Obama's health care law also known as Obamacare. These actions allowed some employers to opt out of providing insured birth control on the basis of religion and moral convictions. Title X, a federal program providing reproductive health care, was targeted by Trump in 2019 – barring all providers from mentioning abortion, lest they lose their funding. This caused seven state governments and Planned Parenthood to withdraw from the program. He also cut funding to Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs.

If he takes office, he could possibly make affordable birth control much harder to get through insurance. In the past, the GOP has attempted to repeal the Affordable Care Act, backed by Trump. If it was completely dismantled, millions could lose access to no-cost birth control. Plans by the Biden administration to increase access to no-cost birth control could also be blocked.

Though Trump has tried to distance himself from it, Project 2025 takes aim at emergency contraception like Plan B, or the “morning-after pill,” by conflating it as an “abortifacient” and calling for it not to be considered contraception – removing insurance coverage under Obamacare.

Finally, through the Supreme Court, there is a small possibility that *Griswold v. Connecticut* could be overturned. This ruling says that the Constitution protects the use of contraceptives by married couples from government restrictions, and was expanded to unmarried couples with *Eisenstadt v. Baird*. While there are no solid plans to overturn either, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas called to reconsider *Griswold v. Connecticut* following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

– Trinity Balboa

Can he institute a federal abortion ban?

President-elect Donald Trump said he would not sign a federal abortion ban, preferring to leave the decision up to the states.

But in the same election that is returning him to the White House, voters in seven of the 10 states with reproductive rights measures on their ballots enshrined them in their state constitutions.

When *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in June of 2022, it ended the right to abortion on a federal level.

But there are ways that the Trump Administration could still restrict abortion access at the federal level: by restricting access to abortion pills and prohibiting providers who receive some kinds of federal grant money from referring patients for abortion care.

– Jaida Raygor

Can he curtail LGBTQ+ marriage rights?

In 2015, *Obergefell v. Hodges* recognized legal marriage between same-sex couples under the due process and equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. This law protects same-sex marriage and allows them to have the same rights as married couples.

Can a president alone overturn a Supreme Court ruling? No. That power is not up to the president alone; this lies with the Supreme Court.

But here are some things to consider:

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization was the historic case in 2022 that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, which was the 1973 decision that protected a woman's right to an abortion under the 14th Amendment. With the federal protection of abortion gone, the decision to ban abortions became dependent on the state.

Some of the judges who voted to repeal the law were appointed by Trump. They are Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett.

– Matt Brady

Can he limit disability rights in education?

President-elect Donald Trump has said that he would eliminate the Department of Education. But what would that mean for students with disabilities?

The department helps ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities as required under federal law.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act exist independently of the department and guarantee access to public education.

Trump would need congressional approval to eliminate the department and to eliminate funding to the programs that support students with disabilities.

Disability advocates worry that without a Department of Education, the federal laws would not be properly enforced, meaning students with disabilities could be hurt without the regulators in place who keep watch.

– Emma Jolly

Can he ban critical race theory in elementary and secondary public schools?

Critical race theory recognizes that there is systematic racism in American society. President-elect Donald Trump has pledged to go after “wokeness” in schools that teach it. He has said it verges on “psychological abuse.”

Curriculum for elementary and secondary schools is not decided by the federal government but rather by state and local governments on a variety of levels. The president can, however, set national goals for public education through the federal budget, which accounts for 8% of public school funding in the country.

“We are going to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity, and other inappropriate racial, sexual or political content onto the shoulders of our children,” Trump said at a July campaign event in Minnesota. “And I will keep men out of women's sports.”

Since 2021, 44 states have taken measures to reduce the teaching of critical race theory in public schools.

– Anastasia McCarthy



Illustration by Lilly Sundsbak

Can he take away birthright citizenship?

On the campaign trail, President-elect Donald Trump renewed his call to end a long-standing constitutional right that children born to parents without legal status in the U.S. will not be considered citizens. He claimed the parents were “trespassing our soil.”

The 14th Amendment of the Constitution holds that “all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States.”

Opponents of birthright citizenship – including the Heritage Foundation – claim that this is open to interpretation and could be used to deny citizenship to anyone whose parents are not legally in the country.

Although most constitutional and immigration scholars said that such a change would require a constitutional amendment, which is much harder to achieve than simple legislation, Trump has pledged to issue an executive order, which would face immediate legal challenges, likely ending up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

– Elliot Royce

Can President-elect Donald Trump revoke green cards?

The short answer is no; the executive branch cannot revoke someone’s green card status. The only branch of government with this authority is the judicial branch.

The executive branch, through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, can petition a judge to revoke someone’s green card status for things like fraudulent marriages or staying too long in another country. But it is ultimately up to a judge to determine whether or not that individual’s green card can be revoked.

The long answer is more complicated. After the Mexican-American War, millions of Mexican-American citizens were deported with no due process between 1929 and 1936. Around 1.2 million of these people were citizens of the United States.

To forcibly remove people living in the United States, Trump has said that he wants to use the Alien Enemies Act, which was last used for the internment of Japanese, Italian and German nationals during World War II.

This means that if the President deems a green card holder’s country of origin to be an enemy of the United States, then he could have the grounds to remove that individual due to national security concerns.

There are currently 12.7 million people living in the U.S. as noncitizen legal permanent residents.

– Sebastian Isett

Can he require a national ID?

Some Americans are concerned that the Trump administration could force Americans to carry federally regulated identification that authorities could compel them to produce in order to prove their citizenship.

Since 2005, the Federal Government has mandated that states begin issuing "Real ID," a standardized form of identification meant to "establish a minimum security standard" for state-issued driver's licenses and ID cards; and prohibits certain federal agencies from accepting licenses and identification cards from states that do not meet these standards.

The ACLU has criticized the notion of Real ID, saying "if fully implemented, the law would facilitate the tracking of data on individuals and bring government into the very center of every citizen's life."

Trump has not proposed that citizens be forced to carry a National ID but in his first term, his administration continued to support the 2005 mandate that all states comply with the standardized "Real ID."

Trump has spread misinformation about immigrants lacking permanent legal status being allowed to vote and has supported a federal voter ID law called the SAVE Act, which called for voters to be required to provide proof of citizenship before voting in federal elections. The law did not pass the Senate. Additionally, it is already illegal for noncitizens to vote in federal elections.

– Nathan Bieneman

Can he impose tariffs on all imports from China?

In an interview with the Economic Club of Chicago in October 2024, President-elect Donald Trump said, "To me, the most beautiful word in the dictionary is tariff."

Trump has proposed a 60% tariff on all imported goods from China and an up to 20% tariff on all other imported goods.

Under the Constitution, Congress has the power to enact tariffs, but over the years, Congress, through legislation, has given the president greater authority to enact tariffs for national security purposes or to combat unfair trade.

Most of the tariffs that Trump imposed last time he was president in 2018 and 2019 remain in place today.

– Cin Castellanos

Can he pardon himself?

President-elect Donald Trump was elected in spite of a conviction on 34 felony counts. Fortunately for Trump, the ongoing trials against him won't phase him much due to the Justice Department's policy that says a sitting president is safe from indictment.

While it's true that the Supreme Court ruled that a president has immunity from prosecution for official actions while in office, a lot of the charges against Trump had to do with activities outside of his time in the White House. He faces three criminal indictments in two federal cases and a state case and is awaiting sentencing in a fourth state case.

Trump theoretically can pardon himself as president, but that only applies to the federal charges against him, and it's not clear if they will be thrown out or stalled while he is in office because this is largely unprecedented. Because of continuous trial days and an election victory, Trump is in a good place. It's likely he won't face consequences before he's put into office and won't face them in office because he will be president.

– Adria Hedrick

Can he hire people without a Senate confirmation process?

It depends on how each pick is classified. There are approximately 1,200 positions across the federal government under the president which require Senate confirmation, including the 15 Cabinet officials chosen to lead executive departments. The other top-level senior positions include agency heads and deputy secretaries. Some members of certain boards and commissions also must be confirmed.

These require a Senate hearing and a majority approval.

President-elect Donald Trump could try to circumvent the Senate confirmation process by using a clause in the Constitution that allows him to make recess appointments when the Senate is not in session. The appointments last through the end of the Senate's next session.

Political appointments — appointments made by the president, vice president or an agency head — do not require Senate confirmation. Although these individuals aren't required to go through a Senate approval process, they are still required to go through an approval and hiring process by the Office of Personnel Management.

– Talia Sprague

Can he create a new federal department?

The answer is: not efficiently.

President-elect Donald Trump has proposed to create a new Department of Government Efficiency run by billionaires Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy. Musk has already claimed that he could find more than \$2 trillion in savings, which amounts to one-third of the federal government's \$6.7 trillion in annual spending.

While Trump has the power to create the DOGE, any new government agency must first go through Congress, both for approval and for funding.

That means the department will not actually be a department but rather an outside commission or advisory group.

– Hunter Warner

Can he jail journalists?

President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to revoke network broadcast licenses, cut funding to NPR and public television, and jail journalists who have attempted to protect the identities of anonymous confidential sources.

He also has sued journalists, media outlets and publishing companies.

The government does not license national networks. However, the Federal Communications Commission does license local TV and radio stations to use the public airwaves.

Trump also has vowed to bring independent agencies like the FCC and the Federal Trade Commission under presidential authority. Some FCC commissioners who were appointed by Trump have even sided with his complaints.

Could Trump actually jail journalists? Probably not. He'd need law enforcement and the judicial system to help him. But Trump could certainly stymie watchdog reporting or use the Espionage Act to try to prosecute journalists through his Justice Department.

Martin Baron, who was the executive editor of the Washington Post for over eight years before retiring in 2021, said he believes Trump may try to classify more documents and claim any leaks as a threat to national security. "I believe that they will deny people access to the kinds of documents and even the interviews that have been traditionally available to the press," Baron said during a recent event at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley.

– Samantha Ho



A set of stickers protesting the Democratic National Convention held in Chicago in August remain on a lamp post in the quad at the University of Illinois Chicago on Dec. 4, 2024. Photo by Nate Bieneman

Trump's plan to dismantle Department of Education raises questions

By Katie Kwasneski

President-elect Donald Trump's campaign promise to dismantle the Department of Education has sparked debate over its feasibility. His proposal aligns with his broader agenda to reduce federal oversight and empower local governments. But it faces logistical, political and practical challenges.

Eliminating the Department of Education would require congressional approval, including a supermajority of 60 votes in the Senate to bypass filibuster rules. This would necessitate bipartisan cooperation, an unlikely scenario given opposition from both Democrats and some Republicans.

"Abolishing a cabinet department is hard work and requires a number of votes," said John Shaw, director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University. "It's far from clear there's

enough support to make it happen."

Trump has characterized the Department of Education as unnecessary and ineffective, framing it as a symbol of federal overreach and a tool of "woke" culture. Critics argue that his stance lacks substantive policy backing and primarily serves as a rallying cry for his political base.

"This is more of a talking point than a coherent policy," Shaw said. "Most people cheering for this don't know what they're actually supporting."

The Department of Education administers a \$225 billion budget, most of which supports higher education programs like Federal Pell Grants and student loans. Its dissolution would disrupt the \$1.6 trillion federal student loan program, which would need to be reassigned to

another agency. Programs such as Title I funding for low-income schools and Title IX enforcement of discrimination laws protecting women and girls would also face uncertainty.

Trump has signaled his intent to reverse President Joe Biden's student loan forgiveness program, regardless of the department's existence. Some experts caution that such moves could create administrative chaos and negatively impact millions of borrowers.

Eliminating the department would also leave unresolved issues about how to manage initiatives such as campus accountability, and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts, and anti-discrimination enforcement. The department's Office for Civil Rights plays a key role in investigating claims of

discrimination in education.

Some experts doubt the seriousness of the proposal.

Trump “is contradictory on it, as he is on a lot of things,” Shaw said. “On the one hand, he talks about eliminating the Department of Education. Then he talks about using its investigatory powers to probe some of his policy.”

Education officials contacted for comment expressed hesitation. The Illinois Board of Higher Education’s strategic communications director, José

Garcia, stated, “It’s too soon to comment on potential changes and their impacts because it’s all speculation at this point.”

The Illinois State Board of Education declined to comment.

Confirmation hearings for Trump’s cabinet nominees, including his controversial choice of Linda McMahon — a former professional wrestling executive — to lead the Department of Education, are expected in January. These hearings may shed light on the administration’s education policy priorities.



The Redder the Better: Advising student media in red state better for recruitment, motivation and journalism

By Michael Koretzky

In 1998, I was hired to advise the student newspaper at Florida Atlantic University, in the same county as Donald Trump’s Mar-A-Lago home.

At the time, Florida’s governor was a Democrat. So were all but two of his predecessors dating back to 1877. A few months later, Jeb Bush was elected as Florida’s third Republican governor. There hasn’t been another Democrat elected since.

But that hasn’t made much difference in the University Press newsroom. Or anywhere else on campus.

The truth is, FAU’s campus culture — like most in the nation — is insulated from its state government. Even when Gov. Ron DeSantis replaces trustees with his cronies and shuts DEI centers, students’ daily existence is mostly unchanged.

Their attitude, however, has been forever altered. That’s created the ideal learning environment: Outrage without risk.

DEI and LGBTQ

In January 2024, the debut issue of OutFAU was printed and distributed on campus. As far as I can tell, it’s the only print LGBTQ student newspaper in the country, I’m its adviser.

OutFAU didn’t start for the typical reason most niche publications do: anger at the “mainstream” media for ignoring its audience. The University Press was indeed covering LGBTQ issues on campus. In fact, OutFAU’s editor was a University Press writer who still reported the occasional story during her editorship.

The anger was directed outward — toward the MAGA Republicans who were attacking marginalized communities across



Michael Koretzky

the state. In May 2023, Gov. DeSantis signed a bill that banned DEI spending at all public colleges. Two months later, Florida made national news for proposing a high school textbook that insisted some Black people benefited from slavery.

It’s no surprise that OutFAU’s first cover story was about FAU closing its Center for IDEAS, which supported queer and Black students.

OutFAU generated local media attention because its newsroom was...the now-empty Center for IDEAS. That irony was noted by an NPR affiliate and a TV news station. Two other ironies weren’t:

1. None of the OutFAU staff had actually set foot in the Center for IDEAS before it was closed.
2. There was no way OutFAU could squat in that office without FAU’s tacit approval.

To that first point, it’s sad but true that many campus DEI centers are underused.

“McMahon’s confirmation hearings will be interesting to watch,” Shaw noted. “Democrats will press her on the administration’s plans for the department.”

This could reveal whether this proposal has legs or is merely a campaign gimmick.

As the nation awaits concrete details, some remain cautious. “I urge people to pay attention but not to overreact,” Shaw advised. “It’s unclear what will actually happen, and eliminating the department would have profound consequences that require careful consideration.”

I have only my own anecdotal evidence for this statement, because I’ve never seen a study or even reporting on the topic.

Some OutFAU staffers had occasionally stopped by a campus event sponsored by the Center for IDEAS. But they found support and camaraderie within their own registered student organizations for queer students, Lavender Alliance and BLISS.

The OutFAU staff often joked about spending more time in the Center for IDEAS after it was gone than when it existed — and FAU administrators did more than just look the other way. Often, the office was locked when I arrived to set up for a staff meeting. So I’d ask the Student Union office staff to open it, and they cheerfully sent someone around with a key.

FAU and MAGA

Obviously, FAU leaders aren’t MAGA themselves, so they’ve done what they can to covertly support OutFAU. Perhaps the use more professional wordt irony was this: When OutFAU’s editor requested public records about the Center of IDEAS’ closing, she got them right away. As a University Press writer, she still had unfulfilled public records requests from months earlier.

In my 26 years advising the University Press, the staff has always had a contentious relationship with the Public Information Office. Records requests were routinely ignored until we threatened legal action. Response time would improve for a couple of months, then the delays would start all over again.

The only University Press requests that have come back immediately have been about issues like the Center for IDEAS. FAU administrators obviously loathe

Florida's MAGA leadership – sometimes they'd feel comfortable enough to make a snide comment in front of me or even the students. But as state employees, the only way they can safely fight back is through proxies. Student media is the shortest pipeline for their own seething anger.

Right now, student journalists at both OutFAU and University Press can investigate and opine about state politics, and they're not only safe from administrative interference, they're encouraged.

The fear within

While the college students I know are personally unaffected by a MAGA-dominated state government, they fear a future that overturns marriage equality, reproductive rights, and a host of other freedoms they once took for granted. Real danger awaits them after they graduate.

So Florida's red shift has meant they're safe on campus to report all things MAGA. But MAGA also means more problems from within. For example, FAU student journalists are more scared of Palestinian protesters

than Gov. DeSantis.

When OutFAU published a 230-word advance about a trans former Israeli soldier speaking at Hillel, both queer student groups vowed to boycott the newspaper unless the editor issued an apology for "platforming the IDF."

The editor's subsequent explanation didn't help, causing other student organizations to accuse OutFAU of, to quote one student leader, "supporting genocide." This led to an open staff meeting in the former Center for IDEAS, where queer students attacked each other on a topic that had nothing to do with the focus of OutFAU or the purpose of the room before it was shut down.

There was yelling, tears, halfhearted apologies, and soulful apologies on all sides. By the end of a difficult meeting and a long week of social media recriminations, one student quit OutFAU and another joined. I'd like to believe most students learned something by confronting their peers – who agreed with them on every issue except this one.

But I also believe emotions ran hotter

than they would have if MAGA wasn't perched in the background, like a flock of vultures for them to leave the security of campus. Every debate suddenly has a zero-sum feel to it.

Red and irritated

The past seldom predicts the future, and I fear for the current generation of college journalists. There will certainly be a Trump trickle-down effect. State and even local leaders will feel empowered to insult journalists the same way their leader does.

FAU is right now searching for a new president, who will be chosen by Gov. DeSantis supporters on the Board of Trustees. That new president might target both OutFAU and University Press for harassment I haven't experienced in 26 years here.

If that happens, I know both sets of staff will likely fight even harder. Past Republican regimes applied soft pressure and implied threats to keep students in line. But as one student put it, "The queer and colored got nothing to lose, because MAGA don't compromise."



'Journalism Jobs Crisis: A Call to Action' event highlights impact of layoffs on journalists of color, women

By Avery Heeringa

The majority of journalists who were laid off or took buyouts since 2022 were early in their career or in their positions for three years or less, a new report found.

The majority were women (68%) and journalists of color (42%), according to the results of a survey from the Institute for Independent Journalists that was funded by the Field Foundation of Illinois.

Journalists of color were disproportionately impacted, considering they represent only 17% of the news industry.

The survey data was the subject of a panel discussion on Nov. 19 in Chicago called "Journalism Job Crisis: A Call to Action." The event was organized by Maudlyne Ihejirika, a Chicago Sun-Times columnist for 30 years and the Field Foundation of Illinois' current program officer of journalism and storytelling.

The need for this survey was born from the fact that there is little demographic data shared with the public about the people impacted by these layoffs or buyouts. "This is ongoing and there has never been a more important time to have this conversation,"

Ihejirika said. "We've got to find out who's being laid off because it's not tracked anymore."

According to an outplacement firm Challenger, Grey & Christmas reported that there have been 8,300 journalists laid off within the last three years. The IJ's survey highlights three major areas of demographic information: layoffs by race, gender and by years in job.

The majority of journalists getting laid off started in their positions in or around 2020, which was, needless to say, a momentous year in the media industry. One of the most repeated phrases of the evening was that this pool of new journalists experiencing layoffs are "tomorrow's leaders." This underscored a concern over many newsroom's commitment to their future commanders. Journalists laid off after being in their jobs for 10 years or less made up a staggering total of 87% of survey findings.

Tim Franklin, senior associate dean of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, led the team that published Medill's third annual State of

Local News report last month. He said the journalism industry has lost 70% of its journalists in the last 20 years. This is the fourth highest industry loss, behind the likes of the textile industry and CD and cassette industries.

Franklin also said that Illinois itself has lost 86% of its newspaper journalists in the last two decades, and Cook County, in particular, led the nation in journalism job loss in 2018. Roughly two and a half newspapers are closing weekly in the U.S. according to Franklin.

Several panelists emphasized the need for the public, as well as journalists themselves, to hold newsrooms and media companies accountable. Meredith D. Clark, associate professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said that this current moment in politics, with Donald Trump elected back into office, "proves advantageous" for newsrooms to reshape their coverage of corrupt politicians and broken political systems. The way it has been done in the past "has reached its full life cycle."

The demographic data illustrates the

increased instability of the industry that has deterred people from getting into journalism altogether.

Katherine Reynolds Lewis, founder of the Institute for Independent Journalists, shared that one of the survey respondents experienced two layoffs in one year. They had to start from square one again shortly after landing a new job post-layoff.

Deborah D. Douglas, the director of Medill's Midwest Solutions Journalism Hub, coined Clark's statement the "mic drop" moment of the evening. Clark said that newsrooms must face their history of being largely white, patriarchal structures that aren't adaptable to today's news ecosystem.

"White supremacy, and the systems that are built out of it, including capitalism, don't factor for a down cycle," she said. "If you are not producing at a high enough level, then you find another way to exploit a different group in order to increase your profits."

Alyssa Edes, a Chicago-based producer and former employee at WYNC said the trend among newsrooms to produce content at rapid speeds with smaller amounts of staff to do the work creates a supply and demand problem. The result of which increases pressure on individual journalists and increases workloads, which threatens to create an unhealthy environment that can lead to what Edes called "clinical burnout."



Professionals mingle at Chicago's Impact House after a panel discussion on job losses in the news industry on Nov. 19, 2024. Photo by Avery Heeringa

Early in the evening Douglas said that "journalism is not where you work, it's who you are."

But Clark countered this sentiment and emphasized the need for a restructuring of not only the way newsrooms operate, but journalist's relationship to their work..

"Journalists are knowledge workers,"

Reynolds Lewis said. They can "have long careers if we take care of our bodies and our minds and our hearts. This false urgency of '[I] have to get the story today,' is what we need to turn away from, and instead think about long term, 'What do I want my impact to be?'"



Gen Z Vote: Politics, election results impact relationships after Trump's win

By Matt Brady

Following President-elect Donald Trump's win in the presidential election, Tasia Elliott, a psychology major at Roosevelt University in Chicago, came to the realization that some of the people closest to her did not align with her political beliefs.

How could her brother vote for Trump knowing how it could impact her?

When navigating the political divide in her relationships, "I just separate myself," Elliott said. "I can't deal with someone who stands for racism or someone trying to take away women's rights... That's personal too, because I advocate for everybody else."

According to an Lifestance survey published in October, 29% of Gen Z respondents said that discussing politics among family and friends often or always led to conflict.

During the tumultuous election cycle,

the stress levels of young adults were peaking.

Gen-Zers were the most likely generation to experience moderate to significant levels of election-related anxiety, according to the study. 44% of young respondents even reported putting major life events on the backburner, such as going away to college, moving out, getting married or starting a family.

David Kronenberg, a 2023 Roosevelt University graduate, said talking about politics and the recent election with family and friends hasn't necessarily impacted his relationships with them.

Kronenberg said that while he and his parents agree on a lot of issues, his parents will watch media that aligns with the "super far political side" of their views. He said he tries to educate and share facts when he can.

"Even though they're for the right things, it's so fear mongering," he said.

Roosevelt University in Chicago's South Loop, where the main campus is located, reports a diverse student body mostly made up of Hispanic or Latino, Black and white students. Nearly two-thirds of the student population identify as female.

Gen-Z voters were a near-split between the two parties; Vice President Kamala Harris got 52% of their votes and 46% went to Trump. According to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University, support for Trump rose in comparison to previous elections.

Harris gained over half of the votes of voters up to 39, according to NBC News' exit poll. Voters in their 40s had an even split, and voters 50 or older marginally



Roosevelt University is seen in the Loop in Chicago on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024.

Photo by Talia Sprague

preferred Trump.

Despite not always initiating political conversations in his relationships, Kronenberg said he is always happy to oblige when a friend does, or he will insert himself if someone says "something a little dicey."

"To speak politically and [about] our beliefs, I think a lot of stuff online gets blown out of proportion because you can't really tell the tone or how serious they are," which sometimes led to tension in his friendships, Kronenberg said. "But once we're in person, it's a different vibe. It's like, 'Oh, I think we misinterpreted,' or 'Oh, you didn't really mean to come on this harsh.'"

Other times speaking about politics does not go so smoothly for the graduate, who currently works at the university's Barnes and Noble bookstore.

"It just made me realize, taking a step back, that some people aren't exactly who I think they are, or their values are different," Kronenberg said.

Giselle Rodriguez, a computer science major at Roosevelt, reevaluated her social media circles after the election.

"I had so many people I blocked or just unfollowed, some people that I knew for years," she said, including a freshman roommate and a former work colleague.

Rodriguez said she questions whether to remain in contact with peers who hold opposing views. She considers herself to be a very political person; she said she always tries to address political conversations and bring light to relevant issues.

"It's really the more you know," she said. "The more you know about it, it's way easier to stand for what you believe in."

Kierra Rouse, a master's student at Roosevelt, said she has not had any tension when it comes to conversations about politics with her friends and family, but she feels a sense of hesitation.

"Honestly, I feel that so many people are lying to me ... saying they voted for Kamala [Harris], but I just feel they didn't," Rouse said. "Over the years, you hear everything [Trump has] said about immigrants, about Black people, about women in general. He's open about his hate. How do you vote for that?"

While many political conversations can boil over into something more, Rouse said she believes we have no choice but to accept the consequences, keep moving forward — and that "a certain sense of maturity has to kick in for both sides."

"If you voted for Trump, just say that," she said. "You don't have to confront someone or slide up on a post, ready to tell

them every reason a woman cannot run this country. Also, if you voted for Kamala, we just have to nod and go on. We cannot teach common sense."

When it comes to Gen Z navigating political tension in their relationships, Rouse said she thinks that the more people learn, the more it will impact their view on the political candidate they're standing for.

Elliott's advice to those struggling with relationships by reason of political differences is to "go with what you feel," validating separation because of indifference.

"If you don't want to surround yourself with people who go against what you believe in, then you're doing the right thing," Elliot said. "You can't be friends with someone who's voting against you."



Junior Amelia Motino, an applied science digital medium major, expresses how important the past election was for her at Harold Washington College on Dec. 3, 2024..

Photo by Cin Castellanos

Gen Z Vote: Harold Washington College students in Chicago reflect on election results

By Catherine Pineda

At Harold Washington College, a two-year community college in downtown Chicago, students reflected recently on Donald Trump's victory in the presidential election and what exactly happened to return him to the White House.

Trump beat Vice President Kamala Harris on Nov. 5 in a race that didn't turn out to be as close as some had predicted. By the early morning on Nov. 6, it was clear that Trump was going to win. In fact, he carried all seven swing states, winning both the Electoral College and popular vote. His victory was nonetheless small by historical standards.

Among young voters, those who were 18 to 29, Harris was the winner, with 51% of Generation Z voters. Trump won 47% of

young voters.

So what happened?

Gen Z was not the partisan tipping point in the election that some had predicted. It was estimated that just 42% of young voters cast a ballot this election cycle, compared to a turnout of about 53% in 2020, according to CIRCLE at Tufts University.

Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is often described as socially aware and technologically savvy. They represent a critical segment of the electorate, and their participation has recently drawn significant attention from political scientists and journalists.

However, the conversation surrounding their voting habits is mixed. On the one hand,

there is optimism that their engagement will grow, shaping the future of elections. On the other, there are concerns that barriers and disillusionment may keep them from fully participating in the democratic process.

Gen Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse voting generation in history, and their political concerns reflect this diversity. Key issues like climate change, racial inequality, student loans and reproductive rights resonate deeply with them.

This is reflected at Harold Washington College, where more than half of the student body is Hispanic and about a quarter are Black.

"I did vote in this election," said Courtney

Continued on next page

Simmons, a second year digital multimedia artist major. "And I feel like this is really one that you kind of have to let your voice be heard, especially with everything that's going on with the police brutality and all the racism, and then women's rights really was the main thing that made me want to vote in this election," Simmons added.

Despite this, Gen Z continues to vote at lower rates than older generations. For many students at Harold Washington College, the recent election was deeply personal

"I try not to be a negative person, but I am pretty scared," Elijah Gallow, a business finance postgraduate said. "As I read Project 2025. I sent the entire thing to my family and then video essays on it like, 'please, please be aware of what's happening and when you vote.'"

Some were driven by a desire to bring about change, while others faced obstacles that kept them from voting. Nationally, barriers such as complicated voter registration processes, limited access to polling places and a lack of time or resources often hinder young voters.

One of the most well-documented challenges for college students is accessibility. With busy schedules balancing classes, jobs and other responsibilities, many students struggle to find the time to

research candidates or wait in long lines at polling places.

"It was literally, to me, and how everyone has been reacting so far from it, was like it's a matter of honestly, life or death for a lot of us here," said Amelia Motino, a junior applied science major. "And I know Chicago is more of a good-ish place to be in, well, it's still going to affect us, especially here."

In the aftermath of the election, emotions are mixed as people process the results. At Harold Washington College, students are likely experiencing a range of feelings — pride, relief, frustration or even guilt.

For those who voted, contributing to the democratic process can feel empowering, regardless of the election's outcome.

"I think seeing us as a generation, seeing us all want to do our part suddenly was kind of the most inspiring thing because I think that was kind of showing us putting our foot down and finally being like we are going to start doing things because it was about time," Motino said.

For those who didn't vote, the post-election period may bring regret or a sense of missed opportunity. However, these feelings can also serve as a motivator for future engagement, encouraging non-voters to participate next time and overcome the barriers they face.

The discussion regarding voting at Harold Washington College also highlights societal changes among members of Gen Z. Social media has become a popular way for young voters to engage with political content.

As a result, the political discourse on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter has significantly influenced the political participation of Gen Z. TikTok, Instagram and other social networks are not only tools for protests and sharing information on important issues, but also for creating communities of people with common interests.

"I mean, I truly think with the amount of stuff on TikTok and Instagram I've seen of people being like, 'Oh, we're cutting off friends who aren't supportive,' I think that's enough to say that, while maybe most of them didn't even have the chance to vote or just didn't know," Motino said. "I think the majority of us knew that we had to be there and didn't go out and vote as best we can."

To many students, the election results were a reminder of the stakes involved. "I think obviously some people are still struggling to realize that, oh, it's over. We lost," Motino said.



Missouri's broad redaction law could be blocked as unconstitutional

By William H. Freivogel

Media lawyers told a state court judge this month that the Missouri law requiring redactions of the names of witnesses and victims from court records violated both the state and federal constitutions.

Attorney General Andrew Bailey's office replied that the law does not require as many redactions as the media lawyers say and therefore does not violate the constitutions. Bailey's office conceded, however, that if the law is as broad as the media says, it could be unconstitutional.

Mark Sableman, representing the Missouri Broadcasters Association and Gray Local Media, told the judge that the plain words of the law could not reasonably be interpreted any other way than prohibiting the use of names of witnesses and victims in public court records. Most Missouri courts have interpreted it in that broad fashion, leading to widespread redactions.

Despite the fact that the attorney general is not contesting the law's likely unconstitutionality under the prevailing interpretation, Sableman told the court that because our constitutions are "the elephants

of the law," he felt it was necessary to address "the elephants in the room." He explained the authorities under both the federal and state constitutions that mandated broad public access to court records, and thereby prohibited blanket redactions not tied to specific confidentiality needs.

Judge Aaron J. Martin, sitting in the Cole County Circuit Court, took the case under advisement. He is expected to rule early next year.

The Gateway Journalism Review reported a year ago that legal experts around the country believed the Missouri law to be the most stringent redaction law in the nation.

Sableman, a media lawyer at Thompson Coburn law firm, said that the Missouri Press-Bar Commission raised concerns with the law to the Missouri Supreme Court last year. In an article last year, Sableman said that the law made Missouri into the "State of Unnamed Persons."

Paul G. Cassell, a former federal judge and victims' rights advocate, told GJR a year

ago that he didn't know of any law like it in the nation. He wrote in an email, "I am not aware of any jurisdiction mandating such a broad prohibition on use of names. It does seem difficult to justify application of such a rule without narrowing it to circumstances where good reason may well exist for privacy, such as juveniles and sex assault cases."

Eugene Volokh, a nationally known libertarian legal commentator, called the law "a very serious problem" under the headline "Missouri 'stealth statute requires redaction of all witness and victim names' in court records."

Chad Mahoney, president and CEO of Missouri Broadcasters Association, echoed the skeptical sentiment of the broad law. He said his organization is concerned the law could impede journalists' ability to "report the full truth."

The Missouri Broadcasters joined appellate lawyers and journalists last May in asking the court to block enforcement of the law because it violated the state and federal constitutions and was passed improperly.



Illustration by Steve Edwards

Last minute passage

The redaction law passed at the end of the 2023 legislative session when the broad language was added to an omnibus bill covering many matters. No hearings were held on the language of the redaction provisions and legislative research found no legislative record on how it was added to the bill.

The lawsuit against the law said its redactions extended to a host of officials: law enforcement officers; public officials; corporate employees and officers; public and private custodians of records; expert witnesses; doctors, nurses, social workers, and pharmacists; attorneys, engineers, and other professionals who become witnesses based on their professional responsibilities; complaining witnesses, who voluntarily made complaints to authorities; prisoners; court reporters and court clerks; prosecution and defense attorneys and persons whose names appear in documents, at least if the document reports in some way their observations or actions.

Challenging the law along with Sableman and the Missouri Broadcasters is David Roland, director of litigation at the libertarian Freedom Center of Missouri. "Historically speaking, the judiciary has been the most transparent form of government,"

Roland told a group of lawyers last week. "Proceedings are supposed to take place in public."

The traditional openness of courts is an outgrowth, he said, of the reaction to the abuses of the Star Chambers of English history where closed courts tortured defendants and witnesses.

"Often court records are the best place to find reliable history," Roland said. "Missouri legal decisions tell the stories of the likes of Daniel Boone, Jesse James and George Caleb Bingham."

The attorney general's office argued in the court hearing that the redaction law does not apply to all proceedings but only to "names of witnesses and victims ... when those names are made confidential by court order or other law."

Constitution protect openness

In the court hearing, Sableman pointed to both federal and state court decisions protecting the openness of court records.

A string of U.S. Supreme Court decisions beginning in the the 1980s protected the press's access to courtrooms and court records based on the First Amendment. The Missouri constitutional provision rests on the long courtroom tradition of open courts.

The lawyers challenging the law pointed out that Missouri appeals courts began

redacting all names of witnesses and victims after passage of the redaction law.

The Office of Legal Ethics has issued conflicting decisions on how the redaction law should be implemented by lawyers. The office said that when a lawyer has a good-faith belief that all names should be redacted, he is ethically bound to redact them, require associates to also redact the names and to report any lawyer who fails to make redactions.

Opponents of the law argued that two decisions in recent months strengthen their challenge. First, a federal appeals court ruled that a Hawaii law that had redacted a whole category of information was unconstitutional because courts can't make categorical closures of information.

Second, the Ohio Supreme Court interpreted a state Open Courts clause in its constitution — a provision similar to Missouri's — to ban blanket redaction of information or sealing of records in a juvenile case.

The challengers to the law also say the Missouri Legislature violated the state constitution by putting the redaction law in an omnibus measure with many subjects instead of one and by not following the rules on how the legislature can change court processes. That latter error, Roland said, is a violation of the separation of powers.



A sign warns patients to not stop before the entrance at Planned Parenthood in Carbondale, Illinois. "We've had patients complain of protesters standing really close to the driveway with traffic vests (and) clipboards attempting to get information from them, and usually they'll try to do it in a deceitful manner," said Patience Roundtree, director of advocacy and organizing at Planned Parenthood of Illinois. "They'll pretend to be part of our staff, and then they'll try to reroute them to those CPCs, their crisis pregnancy centers."

Photos by Carly Gist

Anti-abortion activists want to take Carbondale to the Supreme Court. Here's what we know so far

By Carly Gist

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* placed Carbondale at the heart of the abortion access debate. As conservative states across the Midwest and South swiftly moved to ban abortion, Illinois emerged as a refuge for people seeking access to reproductive care.

Health care providers saw Carbondale, in particular, as an important access point due to its southern location and train access. Three abortion clinics had opened shortly after the 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, but not without controversy. As quickly as they opened, the clinics began to face anti-abortion advocates. In January 2023, Carbondale amended its disorderly conduct ordinance to implement "buffer zones" outside of medical facilities; the ordinance has since been repealed.

An anti-abortion organization is now

challenging the measures Carbondale put into place to protect the clinics in a legal case that could have national implications. The Supreme Court is scheduled to discuss the case Friday, Dec. 13 in its weekly conference and could decide whether to hear full-scale arguments in the case, *Coalition Life v. City of Carbondale*.

[Hill v. Colorado paves the way](#)

In 2000, the Supreme Court upheld a Colorado ordinance that created an 8-foot "bubble zone" around any person within a 100-foot radius of a healthcare facility, including abortion clinics. The zone prevented any person engaging in expressive activity, such as protests and leafleting, from approaching the target audience without their consent. In the years since the court's decision, many cities around the country adopted similar laws,

including Carbondale, Illinois.

"We're constantly seeing some form of protest activity at our health centers across the state," said Patience Roundtree, director of advocacy and organizing for Planned Parenthood of Illinois.

Planned Parenthood is the most recent reproductive care organization to open a location in Carbondale. Its doors opened in December 2023, over a year after CHOICES Center for Reproductive Health and Alamo Women's Clinic moved to Carbondale in fall 2022.

The organization has seen "an uptick of anti-abortion extremists" since *Roe* was overturned, Roundtree said. Its health center in Peoria was firebombed in August 2023. Due to extensive damage, the facility had to shut down. It reopened in June 2024.

"Fortunately for us no patients, staff, supporters, were injured; that was done



Andrea Gallegos sits for a portrait Nov. 13, 2024, in a recovery room at Alamo Women's Clinic in Carbondale, Illinois. Gallegos is the executive administrator of the clinic, which offers reproductive health care.

after-hours," Roundtree said. "But we've seen regular anti-abortion protesters, people who have been showing up for years with maybe a church group in the neighborhood, be recruited by other groups. Those same people have become emboldened and increasingly hostile, and at times, have needed to be removed by the police."

On Jan. 10, 2023, the Carbondale City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2023-03 to enforce regulations against disorderly conduct. In the ordinance, the council mentioned reports from staff members

and patients of the clinics regarding "frequent acts of intimidation, threats, and interference from individuals protesting abortion access and services." Like Colorado, the ordinance made it illegal to come within 8 feet of a person without their consent within a 100-foot radius of a medical facility. But it began to raise a debate.

One pro-life organization had made its way from St. Louis to Carbondale following Missouri's statewide near-total ban on abortion: Coalition Life, a non-profit with a mission of "ending abortion peacefully and

prayerfully."

"Our primary role is to be there for women who feel pressured, coerced or even forced into an abortion," said Brian Westbrook, founder and executive director of Coalition Life. "We want to be there to offer them real, tangible resources so that they can ultimately choose life."

Westbrook said being pushed back 8 feet would cause the organization to have to raise their voices at those seeking an abortion, which is not what they intend to do.

"That's not how you help women," Westbrook said. "That's not how you have a genuine conversation with people, yelling and screaming. Instead, we want to have an intimate conversation, even if it's just for 30 seconds or a minute. We want to have that one-to-one conversation with individuals."

According to its website, Coalition Life participates in what they call "professional sidewalk counseling" at five abortion clinics; the three in Carbondale, one in Flossmoor, Illinois and one in Kansas City, Kansas. Westbrook said the sidewalk counselors are made up of volunteers and staff members, who are paid to work sidewalk shifts.

"We don't call it protesting because we aren't there to protest," Westbrook said. "We are there to offer real, tangible resources to women."

Westbrook said the resources include free ultrasounds and pregnancy tests, STD testing and "options coaching," which can be conducted at Women's Care Connect, a pregnancy care center in St. Louis. He added that the organization also connects clients with external resources as needed, such as substance abuse recovery programs and financial assistance.

Thomas More Society, a conservative law firm based in Chicago, filed a lawsuit against the City of Carbondale on behalf of Coalition Life in May 2023 to challenge the constitutionality of the bubble zone ordinance.

"On the sidewalk, there is no political speech, there's no violence, there's no yelling. It's very much a peaceful and prayerful discussion," Westbrook said. "And I think that's kind of our whole point with the bubble zone, is that the bubble zone would prevent us from having face-to-face conversations and soft conversations that aren't threatening."

After a lower court dismissed the case, it moved to a federal appeals court, which also dismissed it on March 8, 2024. The appeals court cited *Hill v. Colorado*, the Supreme Court's decision to uphold Colorado's bubble zone law, stating that it "remains binding." Court records show that Coalition Life conceded in response to the ruling, as "it cannot prevail unless *Hill* is overruled."

With help from the Thomas More Society, Coalition Life filed a petition for writ of certiorari, a formal request for the Supreme Court to review the case. It was filed on July 16, 2024, after the organization requested an extension on May 24, 2024.

Three days before the petition was filed, however, Carbondale City Council repealed its bubble ordinance. But Coalition Life is still putting up a fight, hopeful that the Supreme Court will consider the case.

So what does this mean going forward?

Review of First Amendment rights

According to SCOTUSblog, the issue of the pending petition *Coalition Life v. City of Carbondale, Illinois* is whether the court should overrule *Hill v. Colorado*. On June 28, 2000, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the right to free speech was not violated by Colorado's buffer zone law.

Westbrook said he believes buffer zones negatively impact both parties.

"If you can't approach them and have a conversation with them, it's very difficult to provide resources and information to individuals," he said. "And so it's really a violation of both the sidewalk counselors' free speech and also the free speech or access of information of those people who are driving into an abortion facility."

But Andrea Gallegos, executive administrator of Alamo Women's Clinic, said that she believes buffer zones are necessary to protect patient privacy and safety.

"Our protesters already are intimidating to patients," she said in an interview on Thursday. "The tactics that they use are very misleading. They try to wave and smile and get patients to stop for them, and then a lot of patients tell us they think they're affiliated with the clinic and they're not. And then they start giving them misinformation, and the buffer zone keeps them within a

distance, you know, away from our front entrance. And so once they're in the parking lot, patients feel safer."

She said anti-abortion activists who come to the clinic often wear cameras and record the people they talk to.

"What they do about it with those videos, I don't know, but the further away they can be kept from the entrance of the building, I think the better, and patients definitely feel safer," she said.

Gallegos said that she finds the claim of an infringement on First Amendment rights "very hypocritical."

"The very definition of what protesters stand for at an abortion clinic is an infringement on people's privacy, on people's right to access health care, right to make decisions for their own bodily autonomy ... This is the only setting that you'll ever — you don't drive to a dental

appointment and have to have protesters stop you out in the driveway. This only happens at abortion clinics, and they give false information," she said.

Roundtree also offered a response to the claim.

"We respect free speech," she said. "I believe in free speech. They can still exercise that right, but people shouldn't be harassed or intimidated for trying to access health care. So we just want to ensure that our patients and our staff feel safe."

William Freivogel, a Missouri lawyer and professor of journalism at Southern Illinois University noted that the First Amendment is "not absolute." Freivogel covered the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. from 1980 to 1992 and has written about abortion legislation for 40 years, he said.

"There are all sorts of restrictions on speech, and in the case of abortion protests, where you have protestors sometimes getting in the face of patients seeking legal medical treatment, that is a situation where a protest bubble has been found by the Supreme Court in the past, in *Hill v. Colorado*, to be constitutional," he said.

Repealed law raises questions

On July 13, 2024 — 18 months after the City of Carbondale adopted its bubble zone ordinance — the City Council voted 6-0 to repeal the ordinance in a meeting that lasted just four minutes. City Attorney Jamie Snyder told WPSD Local 6 that the ordinance was repealed because nobody violated it.

The Daily Egyptian reached out to the City Council for comment, but was told by Chief of Police and Interim City Manager Stan Reno that the city does not provide responses on pending legal matters.

Additionally, City of Carbondale's brief in opposition to Coalition Life claims the bubble zone ordinance was never enforced, nor does the city plan to enact it. The council noted that it had already concluded other city and state laws provide "sufficient protection from acts of disorderly conduct."

Yet Westbrook said he believes that there is still "chilled speech."

"It took them four minutes to repeal that, and assuming that we stopped fighting, it will take them four minutes to put the bubble zone back in," he said.

Gallegos said pro-life activists will be at clinics with or without buffer zones. To ensure patients are still protected now that the law is repealed, both the Alamo Women's Clinic and Planned Parenthood escort patients inside and are working to alert patients about what they might encounter prior to their visit.

Freivogel said that because Carbondale's ordinance was repealed, he does not believe the Supreme Court will

take the case.

"I think it has procedural problems because ... the law was repealed and never enforced, and that the Supreme Court would want a cleaner case where it had actually been enforced and inhibited somebody from protesting," he said.

However, he noted that a recent update from the court makes the status of the petition uncertain.

SCOTUS has a decision to make

Coalition Life v. City of Carbondale, Illinois was distributed for a conference on Friday, Nov. 8. However, on Nov. 4, the conference was postponed. With four distributions since, the Supreme Court is now scheduled to decide on Friday, Dec. 13 whether it will take up the case.

According to SCOTUSblog's FAQ page, a rescheduled case means it has moved to a new conference without being considered by the justices at the first one. The webpage notes that it is nearly impossible to know the exact reason behind why a case has been rescheduled.

Freivogel offered several possibilities.

"When a case is carried over ... from conference to conference, that often means that there is sentiment on the Court to take the case and schedule oral arguments, but I don't know whether just rescheduling it means that as well or not," he said. "It might mean that there's a couple of justices or more on the court who are interested in the case."

It could also have something to do with the transfer of power in the U.S., he said. Election Day took place on Nov. 5, so it was not yet determined which party would take hold of the Department of Justice. Additionally, neither of the candidates running for president was the incumbent.

"Oftentimes the Supreme Court will ask the Solicitor General before they decide whether to hear a case ... to tell them what they think," he said, referring to the lawyer that serves in the Department of Justice and speaks for the government in the Supreme Court. "And because as of Election Day, it's going to be, once Trump is in office, it's gonna be an entirely different Solicitor General with an entirely different view ... I'm thinking, well, maybe the justices just decided, 'Let's wait and ask the Trump Justice Department what it thinks.'"

For the case to be argued by the Supreme Court, four justices must vote to take it.

Several outcomes may occur

If the Supreme Court decides to take the case, a decision will either be made in favor of Coalition Life or the City of Carbondale.

"We are very, very hopeful that the Supreme Court will take up *Coalition Life v. Carbondale* and finally put *Hill v.*

Colorado in the trash can where it belongs," Westbrook said.

Roundtree chooses not to speculate on a decision, but noted Planned Parenthood's top priority is "for everyone to have access to essential health care that they need, that they deserve."

"We plan to do everything within our power to just ensure that our patients and our staff and our volunteer network are not only safe but taken care of," she said.

Freivogel said Carbondale would not be the only place affected if the Supreme Court decides to take the case. For Tara Bell, an escort at Planned Parenthood who helps patients safely navigate protests in Carbondale, that's a top concern.

"It would be even more unfortunate to see Carbondale lose something and then that precedence be taken and applied to other places as well, where even those cities lose even more rights," she said.

Freivogel noted the majority of Supreme Court cases start at the local level, but the constitutional rulings apply nationwide.

"It wouldn't just impact Carbondale," he said. "If the Supreme Court takes this case and decides that Hill v. Colorado was incorrectly decided, it overturns that precedent, just like they decided in Dobbs [v. Jackson] that Roe v. Wade was incorrectly decided. Then that will have a national impact."

In Dobbs v. Jackson, Mississippi State Health Officer Thomas Dobbs challenged local abortion clinic Jackson Women's Health Organization.

"It was a local dispute that resulted in a ruling that had national application," Freivogel said. "In Roe v. Wade, Jane Roe was a woman in Texas who was seeking an abortion. Wade was District Attorney of [Dallas] County. So all these things start as local legal disputes, but when the Supreme Court issues a constitutional interpretation, as they will be asked to do in this case by Coalition Life, then that has an application across the board."

Bell said that even if the bubble ordinance is lost, "we don't want to lose more protections over squabbles with that particular organization regarding free speech."

If the Supreme Court decides to take the case, the process would be lengthy. Freivogel said it would probably take a year for a ruling to be made.

"If they take it, then after a few months, they schedule an oral argument, which could either be at the end of this court term in their last arguments in late spring, or they would schedule it for the next court term that would begin the following October of 2025," he said, adding that cases like these often have a large number of amicus curiae briefs written on each side, potentially 100.

Amicus curiae briefs are arguments



Darlene Blumenstock (right) and Bob Owens (left), both of Marion, Illinois, wave at passing cars on a rainy morning Nov. 13, 2024, in front of CHOICES Center for Reproductive Health in Carbondale, Illinois. CHOICES provides abortions, which Blumenstock and Owens oppose. "They have a lot of choices when they come here, they just don't know it," Owens said.

written by parties that are not associated with the legal case but have been permitted to offer expertise or insight to the court. After the briefs are reviewed is when the oral argument would be held, Freivogel said.

"More months would pass, and probably in early 2026 there would be a decision," he said.

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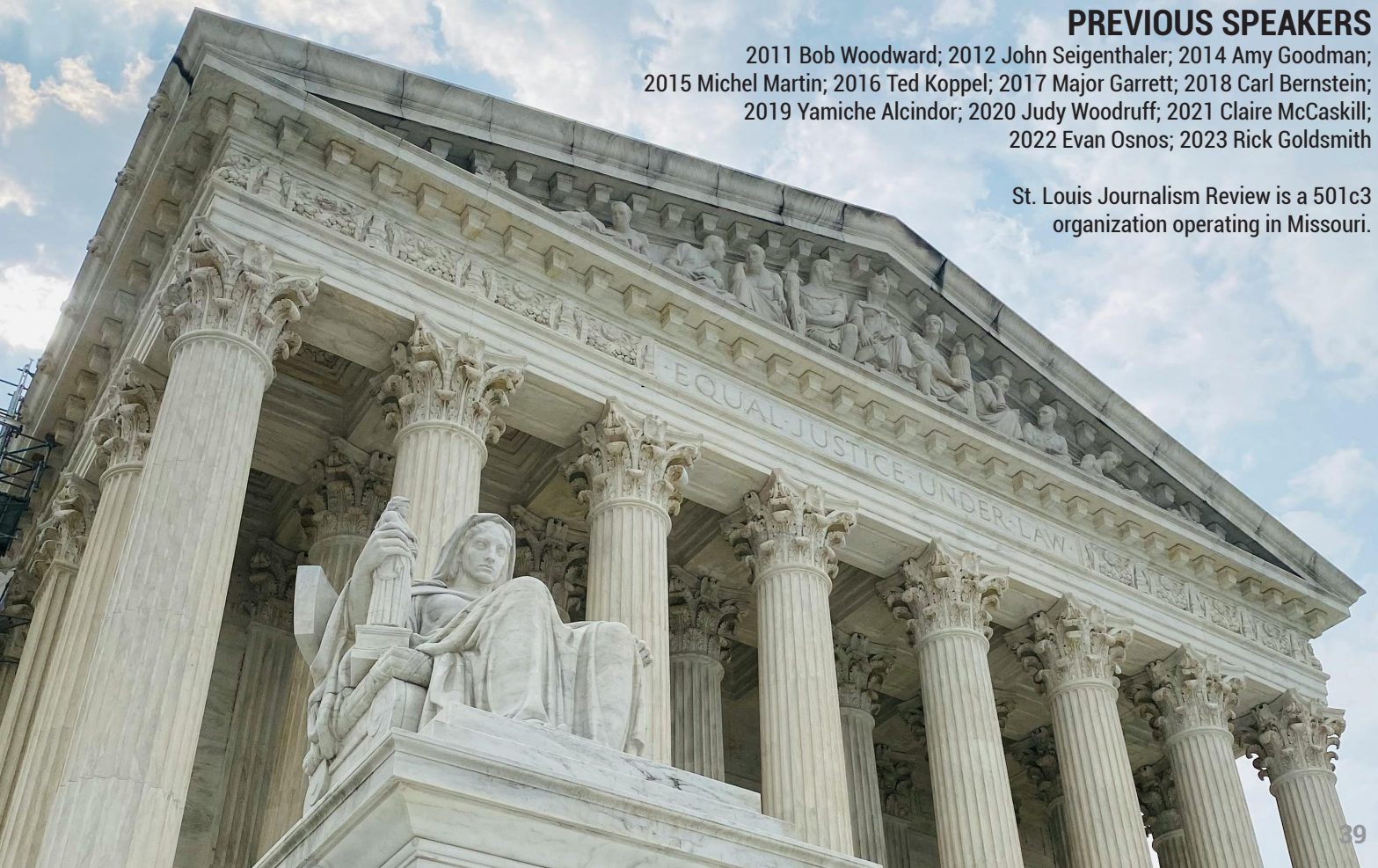
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