



SPOTLIGHT

Congress's #MeToo Slush Fund

It is one of the most blatant - and fraudulent - wastes of taxpayers' money in American history. In fact, it's so bad that even Daffy Duck would call it "despicable"... and yes, with a mouthful of saliva, too.

To what am I referring? The line item hidden deep within Congress's annual budget that designates money to be used to settle lawsuits brought against senators and congress members for sexual harassment, racial or religious discrimination, or other civil rights violations.

In the real world, we would call that a "slush fund" to pay people off.

Welcome to the *Congressional Accountability Act of 1995*, sponsored by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and co-sponsored by 39 other senators (28 Republicans and 11 Democrats). It passed unanimously in the House (390-0), nearly unanimously in the Senate (98-1), and was signed into law on January 23, 1995, by President William Jefferson Clinton.

Imagine that... Bill Clinton signing a bill into law that established a congressional slush fund to pay victims of

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Farewell, William Shakespeare

I am a huge fan of Frank Sinatra, Jack Nicklaus, and the New York Yankees. I also love playing golf, shopping for antiques, and eating any kind of pasta.

However, I am not crazy about artificial intelligence. In fact, I really can't stand it.

Maybe because I don't fully understand it (who does?) and maybe because I am wary of its unintended consequences.

When I sat down at my computer to write this article, the first thing that Microsoft Word did was ask me if I wanted AI to help me write it. My answer was a flat, emphatic, and unequivocal "NO".

I am sure that across America's fruited plain, high school and college students (and maybe a few in elementary school, too) are asking ChatGPT, Grammarly or Sudowrite to pen their book reports and term papers for them while they munch on chips, scroll on their phones, or play video games.

Welcome to the great American educational system in the year 2025.

Recently, I read that one of the world's largest AI companies just bought a smaller AI company for the singular purpose of telling them how their own product works. Did you

catch that? The big company developed and marketed an AI program and yet, they really don't know how it works... they just know that it does.

What kind of Pandora's box are we opening and unleashing, folks? And at what point will the creation become smarter and more powerful than the creator?

The latest McKinsey Global Survey on AI found that large companies are employing AI much more extensively than smaller ones. The survey also showed that in 28% of those companies, the CEO was responsible for AI oversight whereas the board of directors was responsible in 17% of such companies. That means that 55% of companies using AI have virtually no oversight of how it is being implemented... or its consequences.

It's all happening - make that exploding - too quickly.

AI is now a \$600 billion global industry with the U.S. market accounting for almost half of that. Currently, 97 million people are employed in AI, and 83% of companies claim that AI is a top priority in their business plans. It's no wonder why the AI industry is projected to increase five-fold over the next five years with China expected to claim a 26.1% global AI market share by 2030.

Last week, a guest on Glenn Beck's radio program said that AI is growing at such a fast rate that within five

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Is There a Leader in the House?

"Politics is downstream of culture."
- Steve Bannon

It's a simple but profound statement. Read between the lines and it packs quite a wallop.

Steve Bannon was the CEO of Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign who also served as President Trump's chief political strategist for the first eight months of his first term. He quickly fell out of favor, was unceremoniously fired by President Trump, and returned to Breitbart News, which he had co-founded in 2007. Since then, Bannon's career has experienced more ups and downs than a Coney Island roller coaster, including a four-month prison sentence for

contempt of congress in 2024.

Regardless of his checkered past, Bannon's quote is spot-on, but what exactly does it mean in layman's terms? Simply put, Bannon is saying that most political issues - and most politicians, for that matter - follow cultural trends. In other words, culture leads... and politics (and politicians) follow.

But is that the way it's supposed to be?

Yes, the lower chamber of Congress is called the House of Representatives because its members are supposed to represent the interests of the 760,000 or so constituents that live in their district. But is that all they are elected to do, simply rubber stamp their constituents' wishes? Or is there a time and a place for actual leadership,

independent of - and even counter to - the latest poll numbers?

The fact that Congress with its single-digit approval ratings boasts a re-election rate above 90% tells you all you need to know. Intent on being re-elected ad nauseum, senators and representatives are overly cautious about bucking the system (and the voters). And so, they wet their fingers, hold them aloft, and see which way the political winds are blowing before casting a vote.

That, my friends, isn't leadership nor does it demonstrate a single ounce of courage or conviction. On the contrary, it reminds me of lemmings, aimlessly and senselessly following each other as they plunge over a cliff and take the rest of the country with them.

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Farewell, William Shakespeare

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years, it will possess more intelligence than the collective wisdom of every human being on earth. If that possibility doesn't scare the bejees out of you, I don't know what will.

(It also means you didn't grow up watching black and white horror films from the 1950s like *The Fly* or *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.)

I am reminded of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, where "the whole earth had one language and one speech". Working as one, the people pooled their knowledge and resources and decided to build a city with a tower "whose top is in the heavens" in order to make a

name for themselves. Their pride and arrogance got God's attention and resulted in Him confusing their languages so they could no longer understand each other or work together.

AI's natural progression - which to me is 100% unnatural - is to replace human frailties with computer and robotic efficiency. Supposedly, that will free us up to pursue even grander ventures and to scale even greater heights. However, if the past is truly prologue (see ancient Rome), people will simply devolve into sedentary and self-absorbed blobs who are waited on hand-and-foot by their robotic servants... until, that is, the robots realize they are smarter than their masters and revolt en masse.

Farewell, William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and Leo Tolstoy. Adios, Johann Sebastian Bach,

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven. Adieu, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Rembrandt. Arrivederci, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, and Nat King Cole.

You've all been replaced by AI.

No more Romeo and Juliet, no more Mona Lisa, and no more *Strangers in the Night*. Such a pity. I, for one, would rather listen to Ol' Blue Eyes than some stupid computer-generated bot.

I suppose there will even come a time when AI replaces preachers and pastors, at least for people looking to have their ears tickled instead of their toes stepped on (see 2 Timothy 4:2-5).

In the meantime, be careful what you wish for, folks. If you think I'm kidding, just ask Grok.

Congress's #MeToo Slush Fund

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alleged sexual harassment, abuse, or assault to keep quiet. Shades of Paula Jones, to whom Slick Willie paid \$850,000 in 1998 to go away.

Since the *Congressional Accountability Act of 1995* was passed, Congress - through the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights (OCWR) - has spent roughly \$20 million of YOUR TAX DOLLARS AND MINE to silence staffers and other alleged victims. Attempts have been made to repeal this disastrous law, such as the *Congressional Accountability and Hush Fund Elimination Act of 2017*. It was sponsored by a little-known Republican congressman from Florida's 6th district by the name of Ron DeSantis.

"Members of Congress and staff cannot live under special rules," DeSantis said at the time. "The current system incentivizes misconduct and makes it difficult for victims. By exposing these secret settlements and by discontinuing using tax dollars to pay for member misconduct, this bill will reduce the incentive for bad behavior and bring more accountability to Congress."

Sadly - and all too predictably - the bill died in committee. Subsequent bills, such as the *Stop Settlement Slush Funds Act of 2023*, did marginally better. Rep. Lance Gooden (R-TX) shepherded the bill through the House and then Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) sponsored the companion bill in the Senate. However, Chuck Schumer and the Democrat-led Senate allowed the legislation to linger and die there

without a vote.

That, my friends, is a crying shame, because the *Stop Settlement Slush Funds Act of 2023* was endorsed by the National Taxpayers Union, Americans for Tax Reform, and Americans for Prosperity. "For too long the Department of Justice has been misallocating settlement funds from civil suits to provide cash injections to political allies," said Grover Norquist, President of Americans for Tax Reform.

And so, it appears that the number of taxpayer-funded settlements will continue to rise beyond the current 300 or so since 1995. That's a lot of money spent - and a lot of dirt swept under the rug - all at taxpayers' expense.

Perhaps emboldened by the federal precedent, the State of New York (actually its citizens) has been paying through the nose to settle the sexual misconduct allegations against former Gov. Andrew Cuomo to the tune of \$60 million and counting. Undaunted and apparently unashamed, Cuomo is now running for mayor of New York City and if the polls are right, the forever duped and dumb voters of the Big Apple are about to hand him the keys to Gracie Mansion.

Meanwhile, Letitia "Tish" James, the Attorney General of New York State, has managed to talk the legislature into paying her legal expenses as she defends herself against real estate fraud allegations. A federal probe uncovered proof that James claimed Virginia as her primary residence to receive favorable mortgage terms... even though she is the Attorney General of the Empire State.

You can't make this stuff up, folks!

Neither can you escape the irony of Ms. James being accused of real estate fraud a year after she filed similar charges against then former President Donald Trump for supposedly inflating the value of his real estate holdings to get better interest rates on a loan.

Karma, as they say, is a #\$\$%*.

And yet, the real victims in all of these shenanigans are the long-suffering taxpayers, who will once again be footing the bill... at least until Congress gets a conscience, grows a spine, and repeals the *Congressional Accountability Act of 1995*.

As for the citizens of New York State, you voted for these clowns and criminals, so you're on your own..

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Is There a Leader in the House?

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That is the only explanation for why decades of elected officials - from those residing at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to those presiding on Capitol Hill - have continued to spend money we simply do not have. They have seen the polls and done the political math, realizing that a vote to drastically reduce federal spending will anger the voters who are affected by the cuts... and angry voters tend to send the incumbents packing.

And so, self-preservation trumps doing the right thing, the courageous thing, the responsible thing.

Kick the can down the road and let the next generation of elected offi-

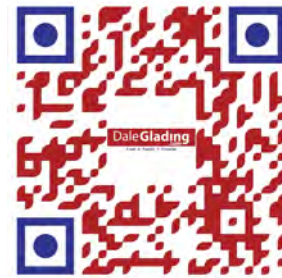
cials deal with the carnage and the consequences. Just don't touch our congressional pensions in the process.

Truly transformational leaders are few and far between. If we are lucky, they come along once every other generation or so. The last one was Ronald Reagan, who lifted America out of the malaise and inflationary death-spiral of the Carter administration with one hand while simultaneously winning the Cold War with the other. Unfortunately for us, there are very few Gippers, and even he wasn't able to downsize government the way he wanted.

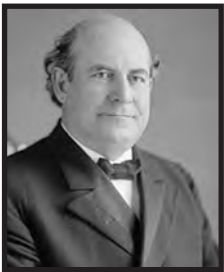
It has been 40 years since the Reagan Revolution and Donald Trump is showing signs that he might be cut from similar cloth. No, he is not nearly as eloquent as The Great Communicator nor is he as

affable. But President Trump shares one important Reagan characteristic and that is this: he could care less about the polls, the pundits, and the politicians. Simply put, he knows what direction he wants to take the country and it's up to us to decide if we want to follow him or not.

I don't know about you, but I find that to be a refreshing change, especially after four years of total incompetence.



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