

Opinion

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Here are the first casualties in “easy” trade wars



Dana Milbank
Columnist

President Trump believes that “trade wars are good, and easy to win.” So he started one. Now the casualties are beginning to return from the battlefield, and on Capitol Hill Wednesday, the people’s representatives presented some of them to Wilbur Ross, the president’s billionaire commerce secretary.

“Corn, wheat, beef and pork are all suffering market price declines ... due to current trade policies,” complained Sen. John Thune (S.D.). “With every passing day, the United States loses market share to other countries.”

From Pennsylvania, Sen. Patrick J. Toomey cautioned that Kraft-Heinz may move its ketchup production to Canada to avoid retaliatory tariffs. Sen. Johnny Isakson (Georgia) put in a plea over Coca-Cola’s rising aluminum can costs.

Sen. Orrin G. Hatch of Utah warned that contracts have dried up for a steel fabricator in his state because of the tariffs, and “multibillion-dollar investments for new manufacturing plants that employ thousands of workers are also being put at risk.”

And those were just the Republicans on the Senate Finance Committee.

Ross, 80, wears eyeglasses and a hearing aid, but he didn’t need either to see and feel the bipartisan anger, and the fear among Republicans, about the

damage Trump’s incipient trade war is already doing to steel users, seafood businesses, cherry and potato farmers, ranchers, uranium producers, newspaper users, brewers — you name it. Even lawmakers sympathetic to Trump’s aim of cracking down on China were aghast at the clumsy way the policy is being administered, the cumbersome exemption process, and the bizarre justifications of the policy that declare Canada a national-security risk but give favorable treatment to a Chinese company accused of espionage against the United States.

Trade war is hell. But the plutocratic commerce secretary was not troubled. Ross’ answer to the senators’ pleas for their constituents: Let them eat cake.

When Thune warned that the drop in soybean prices (caused by China’s retaliatory tariffs) was costing South Dakota soybean farmers hundreds of millions of dollars, Ross responded by saying he heard the price drop “has been exaggerated.”

When the committee’s ranking Democrat, Sen. Ron Wyden (Oregon), told Ross the administration is woefully behind in granting exemptions, Ross said Wyden would learn otherwise if he did his “homework.”

Ross told Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) that he’s heard the rising cost of newspaper for rural newspapers “is a very trivial thing,” and he told Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-Md.) that it’s tough luck if small businesses don’t have lawyers to apply for exemptions: “It’s not our fault if people file late.”

Asked by Sen. Michael F. Bennet (D-Colo.) what the administration would do to help American farmers and ranchers, Ross told him “I’m not in detail familiar with all of the tools” and let the senator know that “we have no control over what another country does in retaliation.”

Ross further claimed to the lawmakers that the huge spike in steel prices “is not a result of the tariff” but of “antisocial behavior by participants in the industry” — behavior triggered by the tariffs. He justified tariffs on Canadian steel for national-security reasons, though the United States has a steel-trade surplus with Canada, by saying the concern is about trans-shipments of Chinese steel through Canada — yet he admitted “we do not have definitive data” about such shipments.

The cavalier performance — much like when he held a can of Campbell’s soup on TV and asked “who in the world is going to be bothered” by an increase in steel prices for the can — did not play well.

“The car isn’t a can of soup. It’s not a can of soup, Mr. Secretary,” said Hatch.

Asked whether he believed, as several of the senators did, that the United States is in a trade war, Ross was breezy: “As the president has often said, we’ve been at a trade war forever. The difference is that now our troops are coming to the ramparts.”

And they are beginning to take heavy casualties.

Follow Dana Milbank on Twitter, @Milbank.



Tom Golisano
Guest Essayist

More support for families facing autism

Golisano Autism Center to offer resources sooner

If it seems that more people you know are facing autism, there’s a reason for it. The CDC says the rate of schoolchildren with autism doubled between 2004 and 2014, from 1 in 125 to 1 in 59.

Autism doesn’t discriminate. Not on the basis of race, geography, or social class. Parents and people dealing with autism need a place to turn. While many resources exist, some are hard to access, especially for families in urban and rural communities.

I know firsthand how overwhelming it is to navigate support systems. My experience raising a child with intellectual disabilities was a driving force in my establishing the Golisano Foundation in 1985. I am proud of our work to create better opportunities for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD), including leadership support for the new Golisano Autism Center.

When the Golisano Autism Center opens in 2019, it will serve as a central resource, the only one of its kind in our region, for families to access a full lifespan of autism-related services under one roof, in the City of Rochester.

We have made tremendous progress moving the Center forward. In response to recent tragic events, our partners have mobilized certain aspects of the Center at a more rapid pace. I’m inspired by the work of the Center’s lead partners — AutismUp, All Sigl Community of Agencies, CP Rochester and my Foundation — who realized families couldn’t wait for the Center to open to connect with vital supports.

We’re excited to announce that two essential resources will be available much sooner than originally planned.

One, a key service we will offer before the Center’s 2019 launch, is support and assistance from a Family Autism Navigator. Staffed by a parent with firsthand experience and professional training to assist individuals and families in finding resources, the navigator will be based at the Boys & Girls Club in the City of Rochester and will be active throughout the community by mid-July.

And two, by July 1, the Golisano Autism Center will launch a dedicated helpline — 1-866-AUTISM4 — staffed seven days a week by information-and-referral specialists. We’re working with 2-1-1 operators, who can help families understand the resources available for autism-specific needs and how to access existing services that may be unknown to families affected by autism.

Those living with autism in our community will not have to go on this journey alone. The Center’s strength is built on collaboration. I encourage those working to address autism in our community to connect with our partners at the Golisano Autism Center today. Together, we can support each and every family in finding the hope, the courage and the resources they need to meet these challenges, and succeed.

Tom Golisano is founder of Paychex and the Golisano Foundation.

The politics standing behind separation anxiety



Cal Thomas
Columnist

Need proof that the current controversy over children of undocumented immigrants is more political than humanitarian? Hillary Clinton said she was “adamantly against illegal immigrants” and supported a border wall until she ran for president in 2016.

In his 1995 State of the Union address, President Bill Clinton said: “All Americans, not only in the states most heavily affected, but in every place in this country are rightly disturbed by the large numbers of illegal aliens entering our country. The jobs they hold might otherwise be held by citizens or legal immigrants. The public services they use impose burdens on our taxpayers.” Clinton went on to tout the importance of border security.

Now, Democrats, whose policies have contributed to the separation of parents from children — I refer to Aid to Families with Dependent Children, one provision of which, enacted by numerous states, disqualified families from receiving benefits if any adult male was found living in the house — want us to believe they are overwhelmed with empathy at the sight of crying kids along our southern border.

President Trump is following up on a campaign pledge to stop the flood of undocumented immigrants. On Mon-

day he vowed: “The United States will not be a migrant camp, and it will not be a refugee holding facility.”

During a White House press briefing, Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen defended the administration’s zero-tolerance immigration policy. “We will enforce every law we have on the books to defend the sovereignty and security of the United States. ... This entire crisis ... is not new. It is been occurring and expanded over many decades. But currently it is the exclusive product of loopholes in our federal immigration laws that prevent illegal immigrant minors and family members from being detained and removed to their home countries.”

CNN responded, “She offered a technical response to a deeply emotional issue.”

If emotion is to supersede law, then just about any law can be circumvented if the emotional level is high enough.

True to form, many congressional Republicans have headed for the weeds, afraid to battle emotions with facts and to stand up for border security and for Americans who are becoming victims to gang members who’ve entered the country illegally.

Most of those crossing the border have no documents so we have no idea who they are. We have only their word that they are fleeing violence in their home countries. We also don’t know if the children accompanying them are theirs. Smugglers can coach kids and adults to tell border guards almost any-

thing.

National Review magazine addresses the separation problem. It’s rooted in the “Flores Consent Decree from 1997, which states that unaccompanied children can be held only 20 days. A ruling by the Ninth Circuit extended this 20-day limit to children who come as part of family units. So even if we want to hold a family unit together, we are forbidden from doing so.”

National Review further quotes from an April New York Times story: “Some migrants have admitted they brought their children not only to remove them from danger in such places as Central America and Africa, but because they believed it would cause the authorities to release them from custody sooner. Others have admitted to posing falsely with children who are not their own, and Border Patrol officials say that such instances of fraud are increasing.”

“According to azcentral.com, it is ‘common to have parents entrust their children to a smuggler as a favor or for profit.’”

With so many good signs that the country is on the right track and with President Trump’s approval rating at 45 percent, the highest it has been since the beginning of his term, Democrats and the major media have no other issue except the immigration issue, and it may be the Democrats’ last gasp — and last hope — before the November election.

(Readers may email Cal Thomas at tcaditors@tribpub.com.)

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