

# Freedom's View

A Commentary on Government from Atop the Capitol

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Vol. 2

"All the other alternative facts you need to know"

No. 1

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## MAYBE THERE'S A PILL FOR IT . . . .

### Flight of Fancy Tries to Get Part of the Government Moving Again

January 26, 2018

WASHINGTON, DC ~*Armed Freedom*

I'm the "emotional support" statue for my American eagle friend, *e. Pluribus Unum*. I seldom fly since squeezing my seven tons into even First Class seats is daunting. And don't even get me started on their required *miniscule* carry-on bags, and getting my sword through TSA! But when I do fly, *Unum* gets special treatment as *my* emotional support animal.

(I imagine some of you are snarking about how "precious" that is, but truth be told, the true greatness of our nation and our freedoms rise in direct proportion to our success in creating "one out of many." So, we think we're actually quite an appropriate couple.)

On a recent flight to assess the recovery efforts in Puerto Rico, *Unum* asked me what was happening down in the "deep rotunda," as she calls it, where Congress (allegedly) does its work. I decided to combine a little bit of real news with *just a wee bit of fancy* to entertain us both. What follows is part of the story I told her.

Democrats, reflecting the historically "big tent" spectrum of their party, recently described their members of a bi-partisan committee, created to end the government shutdown, as either *pragmatists* or *quislings*. Their labels



depended on the level of trust they had that Mitch McConnell would keep his promise to bring up DACA for a vote before February 8. So far, McConnell has *betrayed* the trust of Sen. Susan Collins (*R. - Maine*), who voted for the Tax Reform bill in exchange for McConnell's promise to bring up a vote last December to mitigate the negative effects of that bill on health insurance markets.

In preparation for what might become further McConnell-led stalling on DACA, this same bi-partisan group returned again to Collins' office and pulled another all-nighter, attempting to craft workable, pre-emptive strategies to loosen up the dead-lock that has so often characterized the Senate in recent years.

I spoke with some of the committee's members, *Unum*, and here's the story based on those interviews, more or less.

"We exhausted all our usual remedies and we were stymied," reported one red-eyed, bedraggled senator, whose five-o'clock shadow had hit the accelerator twenty hours ago and was now clearly heading toward ZZ Top-land. "Then, one of the junior senators suggested we seek consultation with *a physician*, of all people, in the hopes that some *unconventional* way forward might come of it. All of us are believers in the time-honored Senate tradition that actually originated the notion that no good idea should go unpunished. We told him, 'Heck yeah, Junior! It's *your* idea so *you* go drag in the medicos while the rest of us get some shuteye!'"

Awhile later, the N.I.H.'s Dr. Perry Stalsis (*below*) was introduced to the group. "Perhaps an analogy from my field will help," he began.



Why ask me? I'm a doctor.

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## A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR

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"Sometimes people suffer from a severe form of constipation called *paralytic ileus*. That's when the normal movement of the small intestine that moves food along ceases. Is that what you all in the Senate are experiencing?"

"You have *no idea*, doctor! Nothing on DACA has moved an inch since the president blew his stack in a meeting, saying only white Norwegians could enter the country: never the black and brown people from what he called "sh\*thole countries."

"I see," replied Stalsis. Well, *that is* most offensive. In the more polite language of *our* profession we would call them 'anal sphincter fecal extruder countries.'

"In any case, it sounds like you're worried about continuing to have a DACA-caca-brouhaha that isn't going to go anywhere. Since the Senate has been blocked up for so long with nothing moving, you might be courting disaster.

"If the toxins in the blockage of old, nutrient-depleted, food seeps into the body, it can cause a systemic infection. In its efforts to fight this massive infection, a life-threatening condition called *sepsis* can result. That happens when the immune system's efforts start to injure the body's own internal organs and tissue. It can be life-threatening"

"Good Lord!" cried another senator. That's *exactly* what's happening right now! Senators are turning on each

other, each one accusing *the other party* of being politically constipated since, in terms of the other party's concerns they haven't given a sh\*t in weeks. If Trump gets his way and McConnell exercises the nuclear option on voting, it will destroy what little-remaining "connective tissue" we have left! *I don't think this body could survive it*. Is there any hope, Doc?"

Well, senator," Stalsis replied, "I'm just a doctor, not a magician. But with people, we often administer repeated doses of lactulose. It's a synthetic sugar, non-prescription medication safely in use for sixty years. It's even on the United Nations' List of Essential Medicines. But now I've got to get back to work. I don't know if anything I've said helps, but it's all I've got."



They thanked Dr. Stalsis and he left. "Junior, that was an enlightening analogy," the same senior senator began, "but how in the heck are we going to actually treat the Senate's condition? We can't just go desk-to-desk asking everyone to swallow a teaspoon of lactulose. Even if we did, that's for *human* blockages, not political ones. What the hell are we going to do?"

"Well, actually, I think maybe *we should* administer that dose to everyone. They'll accept it once we tell them it's *sweet!* Ronald Reagan, with his jar of jelly beans on his Oval Office desk, wasn't the only one with a sweet tooth. In fact, he'd pass out jelly beans *when talking with the opposition*. The way I see it, the bitterness around here could use a little sweetness to balance it out."

At this point, Rear Adm. (Ret.) Barry C. Black, now in his 15<sup>th</sup> year as the Senate Chaplain, knocked on their door, was warmly welcomed in, and took a seat. He's a most interesting person, *Unum*. He's the first African American to hold the post and was formerly the Chief of Navy Chaplains. Among other degrees, he holds a Ph.D. in Psychology and a Masters' degree in counseling.

After committee members brought him up to date on their conversations they sought *his* counsel.

"If this deadlock was happening in *my* congregation, one thing I'd do is invite everyone to celebrate the Lord's Supper. I've seen folks who were at each other's' throats begin to soften and regard each other as members of *one* body that very much needs for each limb and organ to function cooperatively in order to get anywhere.

"But this is the U. S. Senate. Even if they were *all* Christians, and of the same denomination, I wouldn't invite the senators to *that* meal out of respect for the Constitution's First Amendment separation of church and state powers. But whoever said you should go desk-to-desk with Dr. Stalsis' medication is really

REMEDY CONTINUED PAGE 3

## NOT EXACTLY A LOVE FEAST

REMEDY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

onto something, I think!"

Hearing the chaplain's words, the smile on the junior senator's face contradicted the frown on the face of the elderly one.

"Celebrating the Lord's Supper is out, but how about a meal . . . perhaps right down on the floor of the Senate! Surely *someone* can find the funds to spring for a simple box lunch. You could randomly assign all 100 members a number. Then they'd find their number on their lunch box. Finally, they'd gather with 4 to 8 others who had *consecutive numbers* and those groups would all eat together.

"There's something primal about eating together that draws very different folks closer. How long's it been since you all sat down with someone from across the aisle and had a meal with them - maybe talked about the kids, grandkids, hobbies and stuff like that?"

"Years, Chaplain," said the older senator, his voice filled with a kind of sad longing. "We used to do that *lots*. It was no big deal from a partisan point of view, and I think it helped us get to 'yes.' But these days . . . naw . . . party leaders would look upon it as tantamount to treason. We've too often come to see one another as enemies instead of just being competitors."

"Then give it a try, if you want. If you meet resistance, I'm always ready to let 'em have it again in a prayer!" replied Black as he left.

*Unum*, to explain the chaplain's parting remark, I need to take you back to 2013. We were in the midst of a sixteen-day, Republican Tea Party-led government shutdown. As is Senate custom, each session opened with the Morning Prayer. Nearly every day, the bow tie-wearing Black used the opportunity to give the senators what the New York Times called "a daily conscience check."<sup>1</sup>



His "epic ministerial scolding" included prayerful petitions that God would: remove "that stubborn pride which imagines itself to be above and beyond criticism" . . . (help them to) "remember that all that is necessary for unintended catastrophic consequences is for good people to do nothing" . . . (and finally) "unless you empower our lawmakers, they can comprehend their duty but not perform it."

Like I said, *Unum*, the chaplain is a very interesting man! So the newly-emboldened group urged their other colleagues to take Dr. Stalsis' medicine and follow it up with a meal together. Initially greeted with *strong* enthusiasm - moderated only with bi-partisan sneering, laughter, and eye-rolling - most eventually agreed to give it a try when they were reminded that lactulose was, after all, *sweet*. But the idea's further progress was halted when it ran into the objections of a group

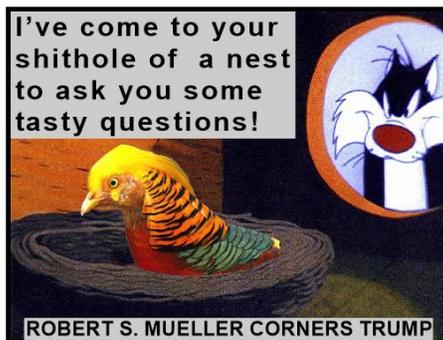
of GOP Senators who have been greatly influenced by the "thinking" of that near-permanent-perhaps-soon-to-be-fatally-toxic bolus of obstruction in the House of Representatives known as the GOP Freedom Caucus.

Much as the Tea Party did in 2013, they refused to go along, one senator even citing the United Nations' *endorsement* of the medication. "The use of this medication would jeopardize our sovereignty and expose us to the U.N.'s fearsome and well-known Black Helicopters. Their troops could take over the country!"

As our plane landed, I ventured to *Unum*, that it might soon be time to invite the good chaplain back!

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**Breaking News: Special Counsel for the Russia Investigation, Robert S. Mueller, will likely very soon interview President Trump to determine the possibility of obstruction of justice.**



**STAY TUNED**

<sup>1</sup> Read the New York Times account and see a composite video recorded over several days of Black's opening prayers. Go to: [www.nytimes.com/2013/10/07/us/politics/senate-chaplain-shows-his-disapproval-during-morning-prayer](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/07/us/politics/senate-chaplain-shows-his-disapproval-during-morning-prayer)