

## ***To Hawthorn Friends & Family -***

Well, as I write this, the airwaves (I guess referring to “the airwaves” REALLY dates this old disc jockey) are filled with reports of Sen. Sanders’ bowing to the inevitable: that a social democrat, proudly proclaiming himself NOT a member of the Democratic Party, is also not going to be the nominee of that party to which he does not belong . . . much to the disappointment of the revolutionary wing of the party and to the enormous relief of the other 70 – 80 percent of all Democrats.

Now, if only Biden can stay well, find relevance and sustain a minimum number of gaffes.

Probably the best analysis of the current factions within the party ironically appeared only hours before Sen. Sanders’ farewell. It was a [NEW YORK TIMES column by the great Tom Edsall: Bernie Sanders Only Has Eyes for One Wing of the Democratic Party](#).

Based on work by Shom Mazumder at Harvard, Tom now sorts Democrats into:

- Party Establishment (60%) – supporters of Pelosi, Schumer, Obama, and the DNC.
- Progressive Left (<20%) – supporters of “labor unions, Black Lives Matter, the #MeToo movements, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the Democratic Socialists of America”
- Neoliberals (20%) – more pro-business and centrist and against “Ocasio-Cortez and the Democratic Socialists of America”

Tom’s column – like all his columns – is well worth a read.

## **The Wisconsin Primary Debacle -**

Yesterday’s election disaster in Wisconsin – whose vote results we won’t know until April 13 and whose health consequences may linger long thereafter – represented the absolute worst in government and political parties, a new low for both.

The BOSTON GLOBE headlined their story, **Wisconsin Voters Forced to Choose Between Health, Democracy**.

The WASHINGTON POST headlined yesterday, **Long lines, anger and fear of infection: Wisconsin proceeds with elections under court order**. Some voters waited as much as 2 1/2 hours to vote. There were reports of only five polling places in Milwaukee, a city of nearly 600,000 people.

And the hometown paper in a state with more than 2,500 positive virus tests, the MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINAL, whose photo leads this F&F piece, headlined it, **An election day unlike any other: Wisconsin votes in the middle of a coronavirus pandemic.**

It would be hard for any objective student of government not to conclude, however harshly, that all are tributes to the stupidity, ineptness and intransigence of Wisconsin's state government: a Democratic governor who dithered and failed to act until too late, then couldn't lead or cut a deal . . . a Republican state legislature that refused to rise to their civic and humane duties . . . a non-partisan, albeit conservative, court that refused to take protective public action, sustained by the U.S. "Supremes."

Calling it a "**dumbfounding decision,**" the best reporting came from POLITICO, that, in part, wrote,

*Voters here (Milwaukee) on Tuesday braved the most grueling of conditions – with some fearing they were risking their lives – to take part in one of the most dangerous elections the United States Has Seen.*

*Amid a pandemic so dangerous that this week the United States surgeon general urged people to stay home, Wisconsin voters went to the polls after the Republican-controlled Legislature and a conservative-led state Supreme Court overturned a move to delay it .*

..

*A similar contradiction played out at the White House on Tuesday, where a president who advocated social distancing and stay-at-home orders, supported the Republican-led effort to hold in-person voting and sharply criticized voting by mail practices.*

*"Mail ballots are a very dangerous thing for this country because they're cheaters," Donald Trump said at a White House briefing. "They go and collect them. They're fraudulent in many cases."*

## **Hearing from a Real Expert on Elections -**

Comments on **Brent Bahler's** views in last week's column were so favorable, I thought I'd give you a chance to hear another voice in an email we're planning for Friday, this one from one of the real experts on the conduct of elections, my great friend **William Sweeney.**

For nearly 10 years Bill was CEO of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and earlier co-founder of the American University Campaign Management Institute, VP for Global Government Affairs for EDS, Deputy Chair of the Democratic National Committee, and Executive Director of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. His views will be worth reading and considering.

And our current plan – who knows what "the winds of change" will bring in just the next few days – is to follow that with a column about America's newly spotlighted, in this crisis, state governors.

## **A Bad Combination -**

On March 25, Washington's all-news radio station WTOP reported, Sales at Virginia liquor stores surge 59% (compared week-to-week to the previous year). And they noted ALL the sales were for home consumption as bars and restaurants are closed. And nationwide, alcohol sales are up: sales of hard liquor such as tequila, gin and pre-mixed cocktails have been in particularly high demand, with a 75% spike compared to March of last year. Wine sales reportedly increased by 66%, beer sales by 42% and online sales surged by a hefty 243% as roughly 250 million Americans are under mandated orders to stay at home.

Last night the BBC reported on **How the coronavirus led to the highest-ever spike in US gun sales**, citing statistics the FBI did 3.7 million background checks last month versus 2.6 million in March, 2019. *“On March 21, alone, 210,000 checks were done, the largest one-day record ever . . . the FBI data indicates that over two million guns were purchased in March alone. Illinois led with nearly a half-million sales, followed by Texas, Kentucky, Florida and California.”*

To anyone who grew up in rural Missouri – where both liquor and guns are held in high esteem (other than liquor, by my late mother) – this kind of increased sale of both, during a pandemic, seems risky.

Stay well: healthy, safe and at least reasonably sane!

***John***