

Immigration enforcement and the invasion of privacy

Los Angeles Times Editorial Board

You might think that the massive collection of biometric data from legal immigrants seeking or holding green cards, as well as from some of their U.S. citizen sponsors, would be a bridge too far even for the Trump administration. But when it comes to intrusive immigration policy, no bridge is too far for this crew.

The Department of Homeland Security, through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration

Services, proposed new rules this month that would let the department collect DNA, iris scans, voice prints and photos to feed facial recognition programs from anyone seeking or holding a green card. At the moment, that group consists of more than 12 million people who are already lawful permanent residents of the United States.

But the government doesn't want to stop there. According to the proposed rule, the government also is considering collecting that biometric data from U.S.

citizens who have sponsored an immigrant, most often through family reunification. "DHS proposes that any applicant, petitioner, sponsor, beneficiary, or individual filing or associated with a benefit or other request, including U.S. citizens and without regard to age, must appear for biometrics collection" unless the government decides it's not necessary. "There may be limited circumstances where biometric collection would be unnecessary or duplicative." That's not a very big carve-out.

According to USCIS, the government wants tools to better verify the identity of immigrants, although it has not made the case that it is having a problem doing that now.

Yes, the government has a responsibility to vet the identities and backgrounds of people seeking to immigrate; it currently relies primarily on fingerprints, photographs and documents. It also has begun using DNA tests to verify the familial connections of people seeking asylum, and is collecting DNA from all detained immigrants to

check against criminal databases. The broad contours included in these new proposed rules would amount to an audacious violation of privacy of people who have permission to be here. And that violation would explode into unconscionable overreach if the government starts amassing a biometrics database on citizens who support legal immigrants in their quest for permanent residency.

Trump has overseen one of the darkest chapters in the nation's approach to immigration, on par with the 19th century laws that barred Chinese immigrants outright and later laws that favored arrivals from predominately white Western and Northern European countries. Remember, Trump launched his

campaign in 2015 with a speech denouncing immigrants from Mexico in crass and offensive terms. It's been downhill ever since.

Republican lawmakers have been largely silent in the face of the president's inhumane acts and blatantly racist statements. So it's probably asking too much that they stand up against Trump's efforts to create a database of personal biometric data for the sole purpose of identifying people who are complying with federal immigration law. But it's not too much to hope that voters will add this bit of overreach to the bill of particulars they consult as they look at their November ballots.

Trump offers United Nations a stump speech

Star Tribune Editorial Board (Minneapolis)

President Donald Trump gave a Tuesday campaign speech that blasted Beijing's COVID-19 culpability, lauded his administration's response to the pandemic and celebrated America's abdication of the Paris climate accord and the Iran nuclear deal.

No, Trump wasn't rallying supporters in a swing state. His address, delivered remotely, was to the United Nations General Assembly. But to both ally and adversary alike, it was clear that Trump's rhetoric was for domestic political purposes rather than diplomatic outreach.

Trump began in the U.N. spirit when he said, "We are once again engaged in a great global struggle." Yet any hope of rallying a "we" was likely lost when he then called COVID the "China virus" and later urged the U.N. to "hold China accountable for their actions."

That suggestion was rejected in a subsequent address by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who said, "facing the virus, we should enhance solidarity and get the world together."

While demonizing Beijing's response, Trump lauded Washington's, saying that "we launched the most aggressive mobilization since the Second World War" — a claim that came on the day the U.S. hit the grim milestone of 200,000 COVID deaths.

That catastrophe could have been far less severe if the full might of America had actually been rapidly deployed to mitigate the impact. Instead, Trump politicized the response. At a Monday campaign rally, he said the virus "affects virtually nobody."

The president also charged China with plastic pollution, high carbon emissions and over-fishing, among other

environmental transgressions. He's right that Beijing needs to clean up its act on the environment. But China can at least claim that it's still a party to the Paris accord, a pact that Trump called "one-sided" as he defended his administration's record.

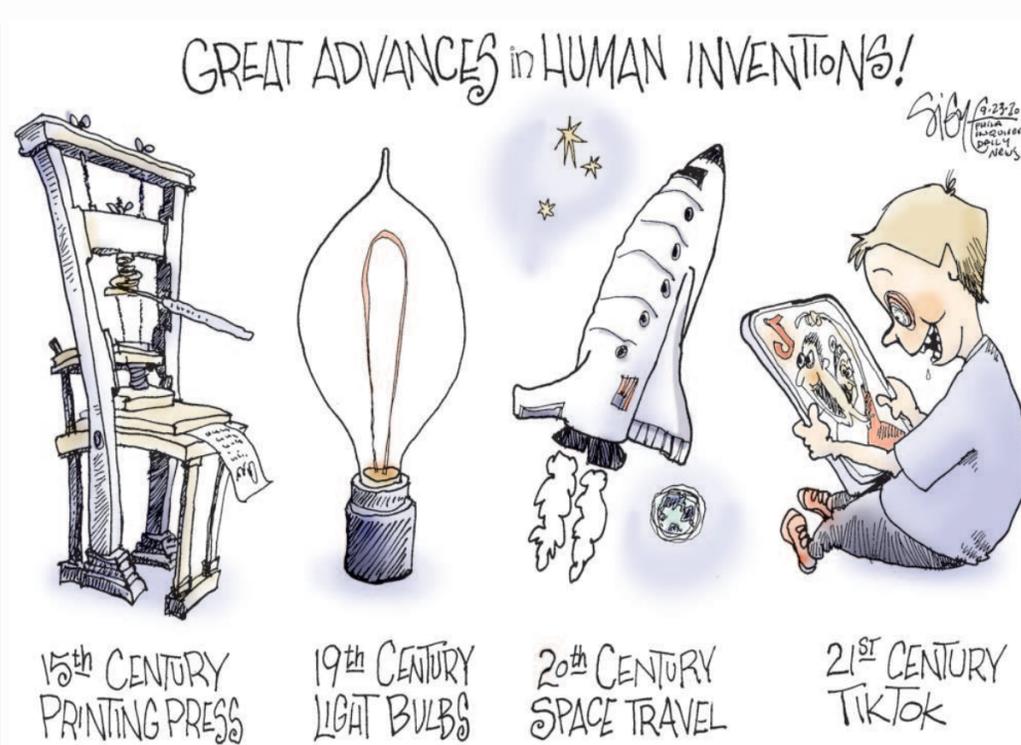
Climate change is the textbook definition of a global challenge that will not be solved unless the world collectively addresses it. Abdication of a treaty meant to mitigate climate change, let alone rolling back scores of environmental regulations, will only make the problem worse.

Trump was right to say, "If the United Nations is to be an effective organization, it must focus on the real problems of the world. This includes terrorism, the oppression of women, forced labor, drug trafficking, human and sex trafficking, religious persecution, and the ethnic cleansing of religious minorities."

Yet the reality is that the U.N. is in fact focusing on these issues. These transnational challenges require global cooperation — including from America — to solve.

Trump concluded his address by trashing "the terrible Iran nuclear deal" — an accord he also abdicated, leaving Washington as internationally isolated as Tehran. He also spoke of recent peace deals his administration helped foster between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as between Israel and two Arab nations. But the focus on these laudable accomplishments was eclipsed by his conclusion, in which he mentioned the U.S. having weapons "at an advanced level like we've never had before."

The purpose of his speech should have been to foster peace and unity in addressing the transnational challenges that the U.N., however imperfectly, strives to solve.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pritzker should reopen businesses

Someone should tell Gov. J.B. Pritzker that it's in the best interest of a business to have repeat customers. Killing your customers is bad for business.

In a letter earlier this month addressed to business owners and chambers, and published by the Belleville News-Democrat, Pritzker wrote that it's his "fervent desire" to get businesses back up and running. "But our economy," he continued, "cannot fully recover until we reduce the positivity level."

Anyone who's been paying attention knows that his reliance on the "positivity level" is misguided. He wants you to think that an increase in positivity means an increase in serious illnesses. But that's simply not true. Since mid-June, positive cases in Illinois have tripled, but hospitalizations and deaths have remained flat.

Yet Pritzker uses the increase in positivity to justify his ongoing restrictions on businesses. In fact, he uses it to reimpose or heighten restrictions at a time when the rest of the country is opening up.

Businesses have adapted to the novel coronavirus. Customers are willing to tolerate some risk. So why is Pritzker making it impossible for businesses to recover and put people back to work? Why doesn't he trust business owners, employees, and consumers to determine their own risk tolerance?

Pritzker wrote that none of his mitigation strategies are intended harm anyone. But they are harming people, and they don't have to. We know what it takes to protect the vulnerable from this virus. There's no reason we can't return to normal now.

— Jared Carl, president, Illinois Business Alliance

What Democrats are voting for

"... we cannot let this, we've never allowed an any crisis from the Civil War straight through to the pandemic of '17, all the way around, '16, we have never, never let our democracy sakes second fiddle way they we can both have a democracy and elections at the same time ..." Joe Biden, April 6, 2020.

Biden can't even read a teleprompter correctly, and some of you are going to vote for him? Jill Biden and the Democrat Party should be arrested for

elder abuse.
— Roddy Riggs, Highland

Thanks to Bost for support

On behalf of the American steel industry I would like to thank Rep. Mike Bost for his tenacious support of steel producers and our workers all across Illinois. Congressman Bost, who is vice-chairman of the Congressional Steel Caucus, has introduced numerous pieces of legislation to preserve steel jobs and stop the trade cheating that has caused the surges in foreign steel imports plaguing the steel industry in America for many years. Most recently, a bi-partisan amendment he sponsored will help prioritize resources for the Department of Commerce to combat unfair trade practices by foreign exporters of steel.

As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Rep. Bost has also fought for long-term, sustainable funding for infrastructure. This is critical to the American steel industry — an industry that has built our nation's roads, bridges and water infrastructure, and uses that infrastructure to transport steel goods to the market.

Rep. Bost stands up for American steel industry

workers whose jobs are put at risk by global competitors who skirt trade laws. The steel industry is grateful for Rep. Bost's leadership and honored to have him as a champion of steel.

— Kevin Dempsey, Interim President and CEO, American Iron and Steel Institute, Washington, D.C.

Democrats would do the same

Now I may be old fashioned but the screaming by the mainstream media, the late night TV hosts (comedians?) and the Democrats about President Donald Trump's nomination of a replacement for Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg is like the old saying, "It depends on whose ox is gored." If the situation was reversed, I mean if in 2016 Barack Obama had been a Republican, the Senate owned by the Democrats and the Senate Majority Leader had done what Mitch McConnell did, almost nothing would have been said.

And this year, if we had a Democrat as president and the Senate again was owned by the Democrats, nothing much would be said about the nomination of a replacement Supreme Court Justice this close to the election of a possible new president.

— Bob Walter, Glen Carbon

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