

genesys dinner xxi

Left Jab at the Union League 2015

Mark Walsh
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Thanks to Jim and the Genesys team for inviting me once again to give you my perspective on our nation's capital and the political scene. Tonight's talk is brought to you by Dynamic Scoring and Brian Williams! That's right, Dynamic Scoring – the new way to balance a budget! All you CFO's out there, pay attention! If you are going to miss your financial projections, just tell your shareholders that you plan to recognize revenue from customers you don't have yet, at price points you're not sure

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And, by Brian Williams. Remember, if it does not sound impressive enough the first time, Make it Better! Brian Williams, in the rich tradition of resume enhancers everywhere... you, too, can be more impressive! Don't forget our upcoming new product, The Bill O'Reilly enhancement App. Make stuff up, then the app shouts at anyone that corrects it! Available in the Apple iTunes and Android Store.

So, we come together to discuss our nation's legislative and political process. I must admit, I sometimes feel like I am in the cast of the movie "Roger Rabbit". You remember that film, no? Where humans lived in a world also populated with cartoon characters? That is DC today. I walk around, and see cartoonish behavior in the middle of every day, in every way.

How better to explain some of the things we see happening? Like the recent bill that was supposed to ban sex-trafficking. The republican caucus inserted some language banning abortion funding, gave a list of changes to the democratic caucus, "forgetting" to mention that change in the list of 8 additions that they had inserted... the Democrats did not read the bill, and it came to the floor. What?

Hello, Charlie Brown, meet Lucy and the football? Now, cartoonishly, we are reminded again that most of our legislators vote on things they have not actually read.

Item two: Senator Tom Cotton, still washing his hands after shaking Joe Biden's hand at his swearing in ceremony, decides to pen a letter to another nation, cautioning their leaders about doing a deal with the US, and Obama. 47 senators signed it, some saying later they were not really sure what it said. Hey, I see a trend!



At least Ronald Reagan had the common decency to keep his negotiations with the Iranians SECRET during his 1980 Presidential campaign! C'mon Senator Cotton, get with the program!

And one last cartoonish feature? Emails?? Hello...?? Let me be clear, there is no question that "She who must not be Named as a candidate" (hashtag – ready for Hillary) seems incapable of not generating controversy, for sure... but, please, everyone in DC knows that if you turn up the high-beams on any elected or appointed official, and... I mean ANY ONE; you will see usage of personal and non-secure email addresses for a wide variety of common back and forth. When I was at AOL, we had a "protected" area within our service that the Generals on the Defense Intelligence Agency used as their Intranet. No Kidding. Now that was years ago, but the blending of cyber personalities continues. And, for the record, we warned the Generals that we could not vouch for the security of the AOL system... BTW, we warned EVERYBODY that we could not vouch for the security of AOL... But stay tuned for more and more "revelations" on this issue. I don't think anyone will escape this one.



But, onto some other observations- first, Validity. I have a modest proposal: That each party that sends out its leaders to make bold and brash predictions, usually incredibly dire ones, about how a given law, or a certain bill, represents the End of LIFE as we KNOW it, in our great and perfect nation, should be called to account by someone, somewhere, when it turns out wrong.

NY Football Giants Coach Bill Parcells once opined on his sport by saying "At some point, you are what your record says you are". True

words, but name me a time when anyone, from either side, has to defend their record of dire pronouncements? Ain't happening. Now, I am biased on this issue, since I have watched with some schadenfreude that virtually every single pronouncement by republican leaders about Obama's economy, the affordable care act, and other initiatives has been proven wildly off base. But, where's the accountability? Crickets... Imagine if the CEO of IBM said that Oracle's cloud service was expected to have a downtime of 35%? Or the CEO of Avis said that all Hertz



vehicles were going to have Radon sprayed on the driver's seat? At some point, we need to hold assertions against the harsh light of reality.

As Robin Williams once said, "Reality... what a concept."

But, now to my two concerns and a short recommendation to those of you in the room.

First I see a lot of concern in DC about two topics: Money, and Faith. First Money: Whether you agree with the Citizen's United decision by our NON ideological Supreme Court, just be aware that everyone in the lobbying and election business sees the repercussions from this decision... and not everyone is happy about it. The city is Awash in dough. Election money is at an all-time high, and headed higher. Dark Money, untraceable funds that affect elections is literally drowning issues and candidates. I used to think that money had tainted, if not polluted politics fifteen years

ago when I worked IN politics, but I never would have predicted this. EVER.

I have no specific cure, other than reversing Citizen's United, and adding total transparency to all donations to candidates, PAC, C3's, etc. But, I think I will see Unicorns dancing on Rainbows celebrating the reversal of Global Warming before I see that. It is absolutely brutal. I think we should all be more afraid than we are.

Now, to faith. Please, take no disrespect from my comments if you are an evangelical Christian, or whatever your fervent faith might be. My issue is not with beliefs, but with history. DC is seeing a surprising amount of denial coming from state legislatures, from congress-people and senators about one of the basic tenets of the American Experience: Freedom of Religion. As one congressman recently stated, when introducing legislation to mandate students at the Air Force Academy to say "So Help me God" in their daily loyalty pledge, "America does have freedom of religion, but not freedom FROM religion"

Whoops. Excuse me, Congressman, but I, and the founding fathers, beg to differ.

Please, again, do not interpret my comments as anti-religion. Hear only my concern that a number of extraordinarily faithful and religious zealots are actually trying to make Christianity the official religion of the United States. They might not phrase it that way in front of the news



cameras, but many in DC are very wary of some of their actions and bills. And this wariness extends to BOTH sides of the aisle, believe me.

Now, to my recommendation. Please, all of you, consider actually visiting the Hill. I mean it. You may have lobbyists on staff internally or externally, and they may dissuade you (since they want you to believe that they have the influence), but your personal visit and exhortation on any issue that you feel strongly about, personally OR professionally, has a great impact.

I am consistently AMAZED at how deeply affected many legislators... and I am talking about household names here you see on Sunday talk shows and in the news, are, when I accompany business executives into see them. All they get are flame mails, weird snail mail and lobbyist visits. So when big cheeses like the people in this room ask for some time and walk in, the Senators and Congressmen and women really are impressed and sit and listen. One visit from one person that they respect is worth a thousand or ten thousand "flame mails" or supportive calls or letters. I mean it. Please go see them. Your voices have an enormous impact. There are many organizations that can do this for you... One I am on the advisory board of is fixthedebt.org, that gets execs in front of "Big Name" legislators all the time, and there are real outcomes. ThirdWay is another one... amongst many others.

And so, to conclude. Things are tough in DC. From Roger Rabbit, to money and religion... it is a wild time. And not necessarily a happy time. It seems like each year I show up here and ring a louder and louder alarm bell, and for that I apologize, but, it is worthy of your consideration. Clearly, I yearn for another, simpler time... and thought I would express some of my dismay in song... so,

With Apologies to Peter Pan, and the song Never, Never Land.

I know a place where votes are bought,

It didn't use to be so gridlocked

And lying comes easy....

Things there used to get done

It's been so ripped apart

Ideological zealots came there

Since Dick Cheney had a heart...

It became game of lose and won

Washington, D.C...

So that's my home, your capital

It may be miles from our heartland

Where dreams die violently

It has its own reality

A better system we must demand

Public comments are often fake

If not I'll move to cold Iceland, forever...

And everyone is on the take

From Washington DC

Washington DC