

# THE TRANSOM

*News & notes from around the web*

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## The Silencing Will Come For You

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Emily Ekins' new report. <http://vlt.tc/40vi> “Nearly two-thirds—62%—of Americans say the political climate these days prevents them from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive. The share of Americans who self-censor has risen several points since 2017 when 58% of Americans agreed with this statement.

“These fears cross partisan lines. Majorities of Democrats (52%), independents (59%) and Republicans (77%) all agree they have political opinions they are afraid to share.

“Strong liberals stand out, however, as the only political group who feel they can express themselves. Nearly 6 in 10 (58%) of staunch liberals feel they can say what they believe. However, centrist liberals feel differently. A slim majority (52%) of liberals feel they have to self-censor, as do 64% of moderates, and 77% of conservatives. This demonstrates that political expression is an issue that divides the Democratic coalition between centrist Democrats and their left flank.

“What’s changed? In 2017 most centrist liberals felt confident (54%) they could express their views. However today, slightly less than half (48%) feel the same. The share who feel they cannot be open increased 7 points from 45% in 2017 to 52% today. In fact, there have been shifts across the board, where more people among all political groups feel they are walking on eggshells.

“Although strong liberals are the only group who feel they can say what they believe, the share who feel pressured to self-censor rose 12 points from 30% in 2017 to 42% in 2020. The share of moderates who self-censor increased 7 points from 57% to 64%, and the share of conservatives rose 70% to 77%, also a 7-point increase. Strong conservatives are the only group with little change. They are about as likely now (77%) to say they hold back their views as in 2017 (76%).

“Self-censorship is widespread across demographic groups as well. Nearly two-thirds of Latino Americans (65%) and White Americans (64%) and nearly half of African Americans (49%) have political views they are afraid to share. Majorities of men (65%) and women (59%), people with incomes over 100,000 (60%) and people with incomes less than 20,000 (58%), people under 35 (55%) and over 65 (66%), religious (71%) and non-religious (56%) all agree that the political climate prevents them from expressing their true beliefs.

“The survey found that many Americans think a person’s private political donations should

impact their employment. Nearly a quarter (22%) of Americans would support firing a business executive who personally donates to Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's campaign. Even more, 31% support firing a business executive who donates to Donald Trump's re-election campaign.

“Support increases to 50% of strong liberals who support firing executives who personally donate to Trump. And more than a third (36%) of strong conservatives support firing an executive for donating to Biden's presidential campaign.

“Young Americans are also more likely than older Americans to support punishing people at work for personal donations to Trump. Forty-four percent (44%) of Americans under 30 support firing executives if they donate to Trump. This share declines to 22% among those over 55 years old—a 20-point difference. An age gap also exists for Biden donors, but is less pronounced. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of Americans under 30 support firing executives who donate to Biden compared to 20% of those over 55—a 7-point difference.

“Nearly a third (32%) of employed Americans say they personally are worried about missing out on career opportunities or losing their job if their political opinions became known. These results are particularly notable given that most personal campaign contributions to political candidates are public knowledge and can easily be found online.”

#### THE ECONOMY:

Unemployment Claims Hold at Historically High Levels. <http://vlt.tc/40tz> “Worker applications for unemployment benefits have plateaued at historically high levels after easing for months from a peak early in the coronavirus pandemic, suggesting layoffs remain elevated and the labor market's recovery is cooling. In recent weeks, initial claims for jobless benefits have settled around 1.3 million a week—halting what had been a steady descent from a peak of 6.9 million in late March, when the pandemic and business closures shut down parts of the U.S. economy. The level recorded in recent weeks remains well above the highest on weekly record before this year, which was 695,000 in 1982. While new applications have remained high, the number of Americans receiving unemployment benefits through regular state programs—which covers the vast majority of workers—has edged lower.” A gap in federal unemployment benefits is now unavoidable. <http://vlt.tc/40vd>

Small Businesses Brace for Prolonged Crisis, Short on Cash and Customers.

<http://vlt.tc/40u0> “An estimated 1.85 million U.S. businesses closed their doors or temporarily suspended operations in the second quarter, according to Oxxford Information Technology Ltd. in Saratoga, N.Y., which tracks roughly 32 million U.S. businesses of all sizes using data from credit bureaus, surveys and government sources. Raymond Greenhill, Oxxford's president, forecasts that total losses this year will be greater than in the last recession, when 20%, or roughly 4.5 million businesses, disappeared in just over a year. He added that some of the losses will be offset by new business formation.”

Household Pulse Survey shows a quarter of those surveyed missed or expect to miss Rent or Mortgage payment. <http://vlt.tc/40ua> “26.4% of households reported they missed last month's

rent or mortgage payment (or little confidence in making this month's payment). This has increased from a low of 22.1% in the survey of June 4th - June 9th... 35.1% of households expect a loss in income over the next 4 weeks. This is down from 38.8% in late April, but up from 31% four weeks ago. This might suggest the job gains stalled after the data was collected for the June employment report.”

#### PORTLAND MAYOR TEARGASSED, PELTED WITH BOTTLES:

Portland Mayor rolls out for an appearance with the “protesters”, gets a rude greeting. <http://vlt.tc/40ty> “Earlier Wednesday evening, Mr. Wheeler had navigated through a large crowd of protesters who were at times openly hostile toward him, shouting vulgarities and calling on him to resign. Then after climbing the steps of the Multnomah County Justice Center, Mr. Wheeler was handed a microphone by activists and addressed the crowd directly via a loudspeaker.

“The reason I am here tonight is to stand with you,” Mr. Wheeler told the crowd, who booed him at times during his speech. “So if they’re launching the tear gas against you, they’re launching the tear gas against me.”

“But Portland activists have been critical of the mayor, who is also the city’s police commissioner, arguing the Portland Police Bureau has also been heavy-handed toward protesters.” As the mayor left the scene, “Protesters throw water bottles at him and curse him. He manages to get inside a building after a scuffle between protesters and his security detail.” <http://vlt.tc/40vg>

#### US ORDERS CHINA TO CLOSE HOUSTON CONSULATE:

Citing 'Massive Illegal Spying'. <http://vlt.tc/40v9> “The U.S. gave Chinese officials at the consulate 72 hours to move out before being evicted. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) suggested that any Chinese agents from the consulate who don’t leave the country within 72 hours would be arrested as spies. The consulate is one of five in the U.S., not including the Chinese embassy in Washington.

“A statement from a State Department spokesperson accused China of having “engaged for years in massive illegal spying and influence operations,” which have “increased markedly in scale and scope over the past few years.” ...

“China responded by calling the consulate closure an “unprecedented escalation” between the two countries. “China urges the US to immediately withdraw its wrong decision, or China will definitely take a proper and necessary response,” responded Wang Webin, a spokesman for China’s foreign ministry.

“Global News, a Chinese state media outlet, posted a poll on Twitter asking respondents which U.S. consulate in China should be closed in retaliation.” Trump says other closures 'always possible'. <http://vlt.tc/40ub>

## HONG KONG WAS A TEST RUN:

Rob York on “Wolf Warrior Diplomacy.” <http://vlt.tc/40u8> “Xi himself declared last October that anyone who attempted to separate any part of China would face “bodies smashed and bones ground to powder.” While he did not name any region of China they might wish to separate from Beijing’s control, his statement came at time when Hong Kong’s protest violence was reaching a crescendo and his language—lambasting “external forces that support the splitting of China”—echoed Chinese allegations of foreign puppet masters fueling talk of independence in the territory.

“The coronavirus pandemic has also done little to shake Chinese confidence. While the virus’s origins in Wuhan and the Communist Party’s initial efforts at covering it up have drawn flak, state media is now touting the country’s “well-coordinated prevention, control and treatment” as the reason for their lower official infection/mortality rate than the United States, and claiming that this is a model for the world to follow. When serious questions are leveled about the Chinese government’s conduct in response to the pandemic, it can always depict its critics as “racist” and imply that the virus’s transmission in China was perpetrated by outsiders, namely the United States.

“As the pandemic has spread and Washington has sparred with Beijing over responsibility for it, this has led to concerns that the United States is sleepwalking into conflict with China. But whatever one thinks of Washington, and the administration leading it, it could not have stumbled into such a standoff alone. Beijing has played a role in stoking conflict thanks to its rejection of compromise, its refusal to accept fault, and sense of national destiny. Such are the hallmarks of the wolf warrior.” Maitra: Hong Kong Is The New East Germany, And It's Time For Rapid Moves. <http://vlt.tc/40uw>

## THE FIVE THINGS TRUMP SHOULD RUN ON:

Kyle Sammin. <http://vlt.tc/40uv> “It is hard for the government to stand against the societal changes that caused many of these harms, but there are ways it can help. Trump has offered his support for the Cassidy-Sinema bill, a bipartisan proposal for a tax credit that would fund paid maternity leave.

“The bill proposed by Sens. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, and Mike Lee, R-Utah, is an even better solution, but both are budget-neutral ways to help young families when they need it most. Our economy has changed to one in which two working parents is the norm, but Trump and these lawmakers recognize that economic concerns cannot always dictate family life.

“Another burden on young families is the lack of schooling in the wake of the Wuhan virus pandemic. School districts across the nation are deciding what to do in September, with many declining to open full-time or even part-time. For parents, this creates an impossible situation in which they must educate children while working full-time and managing the household. People with au pairs and private tutors will get by, but the rest are sinking fast — especially those whose jobs are impossible to do from home.

“Trump should continue to encourage schools to open safely. Universal public education once made up the nation’s premier formative institution. Now, public schools can barely keep their doors open. A six-hour Zoom call is no substitute for the classroom.”

#### NEW JERSEY’S MAIL-IN VOTE DEBACLE:

A preview of November? <http://vlt.tc/40uj> “Concerns began mounting before voting had even ended. Undeliverable ballots piled up in trash cans and apartment lobbies. Even though state law forbids anyone from collecting more than three ballots, roughly 800 ballots were found bundled together — 400 were stuffed into one mailbox, and 360 more were found in another in a completely different town. That evidence of illegal vote harvesting led officials to reject them all.

“Another 1,214 votes were disqualified because the voters’ signatures did not match official records, and 1,000 more because the “bearer” — the person who collected and delivered the vote — didn’t properly report doing so. Voters reported never receiving ballots even though they are listed as having voted — in other words, someone else purportedly cast their vote.

“Ultimately, nearly 20% of ballots cast on May 12 were invalidated. Paterson NAACP leader Rev. Kenneth Clayton summed it up best: “These kinds of acts make people not want to vote anymore.”