

THE BALTIMORE SUN

Lawsuits reveal character, not wealth

Walter Olson

October 27, 2016

The Sun is right to label Donald Trump "The litigation candidate" (Oct. 25) and to suggest that his long record of filing and threatening lawsuits against those who criticize him or cross him in other ways is an important aspect of his public record. In fact, it provides a vital warning as to how he might behave if given the enormous powers of the American presidency. The chief executive's discretion over the vast law enforcement and regulatory machinery of the federal government can be a fearsome instrument of open or covert retaliation against his or her enemies, real or perceived. Presidents of both parties have abused these powers in the past.

But The Sun is wrong to lead off its piece: "Rich people threaten lawsuits. It's what they do." In fact, whether they enter politics or not, most wealthy persons do not share Mr. Trump's habit of using lawsuits as a tactical weapon (and many who do pursue litigation overzealously are not rich). That is part of the character issue in this election.

Walter K. Olson is an author and blogger who writes mostly about tort reform. Olson is a senior fellow of the Cato Institute