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## OUR VIEW: TRANSPARENCY Gov. Walz should release calendar

As increasingly important decisions appear to be made behind closed doors in Minnesota government, Gov. Tim Walz has the opportunity to open some of those doors.

He can choose to make his daily calendar of events and meetings public, even though a ruling by an administrative body has deemed such calendars are not considered public documents under one interpretation of the law.

### Why it matters:

The public has a right to know who has access to the most powerful person in Minnesota government.

Media organizations requested access to Walz's daily calendars near the beginning of his administration. On June 4, Walz told a meeting of the Society of Professional Journalists he would release more of his calendars than other governors before him. Walz said: "It's my hope that we're able to do more and give more than has ever been given by the governor's office."

To the hundreds of journalists gathered in the room, it seemed like he was saying, yes, he would release his calendar.

Then came the memo about a week later from the Deputy General Counsel Emily Parks that calendars are classified as private under Minnesota law. The email was in response to a request by the Star Tribune in April asking for the calendars. A request by Minnesota Public Radio made in February was similarly denied.

Walz announced last Friday that he will release more meetings and events from his calendar but not all of them. His legal counsel said he was providing more information than required by statute.

That is still somewhat debatable, as the administrative ruling calling the calendars private has never been challenged in court.

Walz also told the journalists he regretted the final negotiations on the budget between himself and legislative leaders had to be behind closed doors. He asked journalists in the room to be part of the solution and suggest a way forward.

We have a suggestion consistent with the public's right to know. Walz should release full details of his calendar.

## OTHER VIEW

### Census question a cynical citizenship game

New York Daily News

The Trump administration is engaged in a government-wide coverup of an urgent investigation into the abuse of foundational policy designed to ensure fair federal representation and provision of services: the national Census, the once-a-decade count of, as the Constitution puts it, "the whole Number of free Persons" in the nation.

Last week President Trump, with an assist from Attorney General Bill Barr, asserted executive privilege to block congressional requests for Commerce Department documents related to including a citizenship question on next year's Census form. The question seems designed to intimidate immigrants, regardless of their status, into declining to respond, thus causing undercounts in states like New York and California.

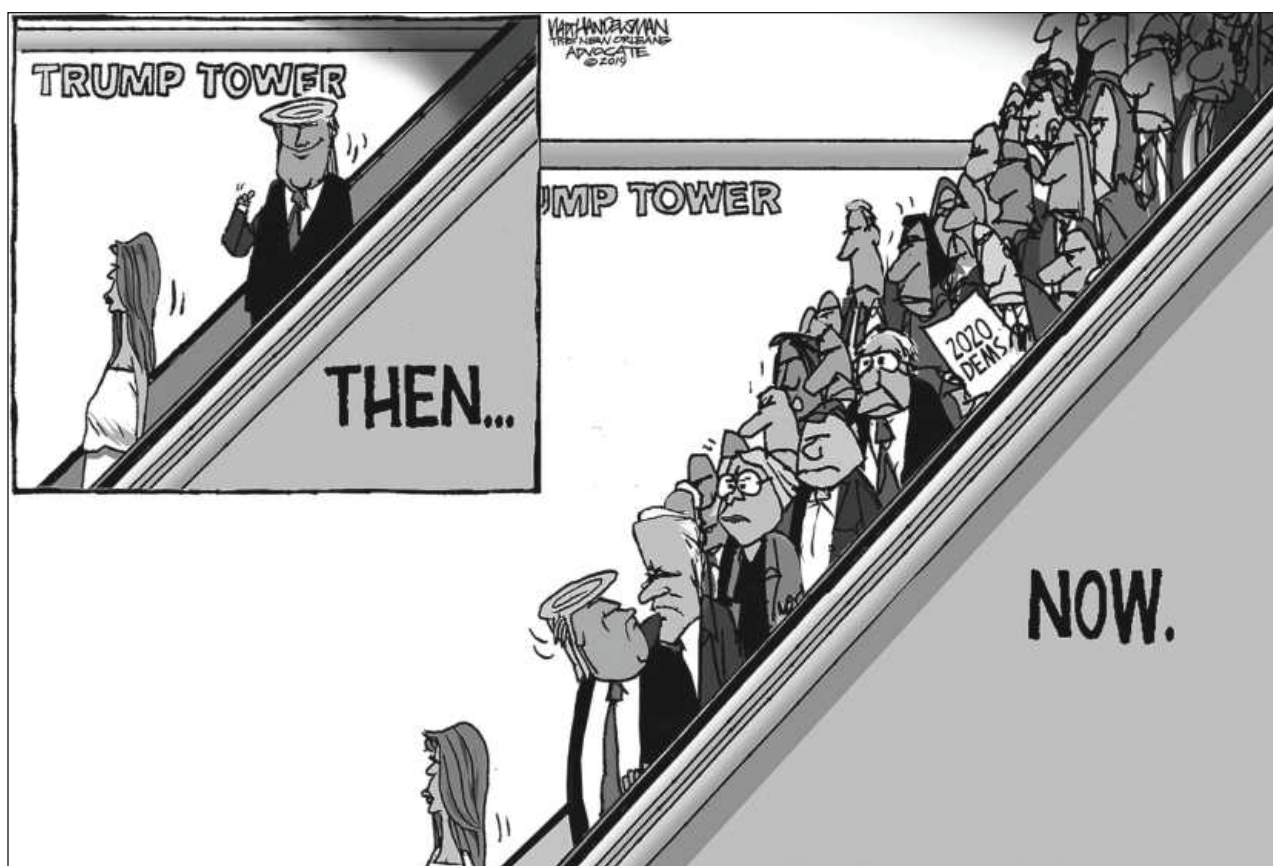
Last year, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross lied under oath in testimony before Congress, claiming

the question was required by the Justice Department, to ensure compliance with the Voting Rights Act. His own staff contradicted him.

House Democrats increased their pursuit in the last two weeks on the revelation that a recently deceased Republican redistricting expert shared research with high-ranking Trump officials that the citizenship question would reduce Latino numbers and enhance the electoral advantage of "Republicans and Non-Hispanic Whites."

There's no question that oversight is within Congress' purview. Executive privilege is supposed to cover sensitive counsel to a president in confidence. It can't be a random shield to prevent the release of documents that may expose a cynical ploy to undermine a constitutional imperative.

Jerry Nadler's House Oversight Committee is right to hold both Ross and Barr in contempt over their devious, dishonest attempts to dodge accountability.



## U.S. legacy of wars won't end soon

The U.S. is officially fighting wars in seven countries, including Libya, Somalia and Niger, according to an unclassified White House report sent to Congress recently.

Since the beginning of the so-called War on Terrorism in 2001, there have been several million deaths in the Middle East, and thousands of Americans have died in combat zones around the world.

A limited incursion to capture Osama bin Laden has led to an 18-year quagmire in Afghanistan, with peripheral operations in neighboring Pakistan, that has no acceptable exit.

This follows the pattern of Viet Nam, where logistical support of the French military in the '50s, morphed into an anti-communist crusade in the '60s. Over 58,000 Americans were killed, hundreds of thousands were wounded, and hundreds of billions were spent on this debacle, one of the worst foreign policy decisions in our history.

Equally disastrously, the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003 based on false information, resulting in the deaths of half a million Iraqis, millions of refugees and spreading war throughout the Middle East. Astonishingly, the United States bombed Iraqi territory intermittently for 25 years, starting with Saddam's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

There have been many other U.S. interventions around the world since the Korean war, starting with military support for the Bay of Pigs in 1961, sending troops to the Dominican Republic in 1965, to Lebanon in 1982 (which resulted in the deaths of 241 Marines), to Granada in 1983, to Panama in 1989, fought the Gulf War in 1991, joined the multinational force in Somalia in 1993 (resulting in the Blackhawk Down incident), intervened in Haiti in 1994, in Bosnia from '84-96, and in Kosovo in 1999.

We have been conducting drone strikes in Yemen for years in support of Saudi Arabia's war against the Houthis, who in turn are supported by the Saudis' rival, Iran, creating one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. We are also supporting counter insurgency operations in the Philippines and Eritrea.

The U.S. began bombing Libya in 2011 to get rid of Qaddafi and has repeatedly intervened militarily on behalf of one faction or another, the result of which is more chaos and stronger support for ISIS.

Somalia has been targeted for years, both because of the pirates operating out of Somali territory and because of the terrorist group al-Shabab, which has attacked U.S. interests and its sometime partners, Kenya and Ethiopia.

U.S. military action in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Pakistan have cost American taxpayers \$5.9 trillion since they began in 2001, according to a new study by the Watson Institute at Brown University.

Chinese billionaire "Jack" Ma, founder of Alibaba, in contrast, calculates that the U.S. has wasted over \$14 trillion on fighting wars over the past 30 years.

Former president Jimmy Carter noted recently that the U.S. has only enjoyed 16 years of peace in its 243-year history, making the country "the most warlike nation in the history of the world." Carter is proud that no American servicemen died in overseas conflicts during his term.

He perhaps knows Sun Tzu's maxim: There is no instance of a nation benefiting from prolonged warfare.

Mike Pence, on the other hand, told West Point graduates recently that "It is a virtual certainty that you will fight on a battlefield for America at some point in your life. You will

**"The entire [Trump] foreign policy is based on a single unstable individual's reaction to perceptions of slights or flattery."**

lead soldiers in combat. It will happen."

He elaborated, citing threats in Afghanistan and Iraq, from North Korea and an increasingly militarized China, and from "an aggressive Russia." West Point graduates have a 5-year active duty commitment, with three years in the reserves. In other words, the fighting will start soon.

Led by chicken-hawks like John Bolton and supported by President Bone-spurs, the U.S. just deployed more troops to the Middle East because of "threats" from Iran; Iranian troops in the Middle East do not threaten the U.S. homeland, but nuclear weapons would threaten friends and allies. Does anyone believe that Trump actually understands the Iranian nuclear agreement that he withdrew from?

What will Trump do? Michael Wolff quotes a comment from Henry Kissinger: "The entire [Trump] foreign policy is based on a single unstable individual's reaction to perceptions of slights or flattery. If someone says something nice about him, they are our friend; if they say something unkind, if they don't kiss the ring, they are our enemy."

That's the guy who "fell in love" with Kim Jong-un because of some flattering letters, making him the most narcissistic, gullible simpleton who has ever occupied the White House.

*Tom Maertens was a naval officer, a Peace Corps volunteer and a Foreign Service officer who served around the world, in the White House and in the U.S. Senate. He lives in Mankato.*

## Big business too far to the left

By Cynthia M. Allen  
Fort Worth Star-Telegram

In early 2017, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick opened the legislative session by prioritizing a measure that would have required people in Texas to use the bathroom of their biological sex in public schools and state and local government facilities.

The bill was controversial. It enjoyed a surprising amount of public support. And it failed, as I believe it should have.

I wrote at the time that it was unnecessary and antagonistic. The Obama administration, which had made pushing controversial progressive social policies a mission during its waning years, was on its way out, and Republicans at the state and national level would be better served pursuing a more productive agenda — strengthening protections of religious freedom, for example.

But one of the most convincing arguments against the bill — the one that probably tipped the scales — was that the law would damage the Texas economy. If the bill passed, the state would be perceived as bigoted, and companies that would be otherwise attracted to the economic environment would elect to take their business elsewhere.

The Texas Association of Business estimated the legislation could cost the Lone Star State between \$964 million and \$8.5 billion and more than 100,000 jobs.

At the time, I found that argument compelling, especially when used to oppose a piece of legislation that

would in practice be impossible to enforce and in reality would have very little discernible effect on the health and safety of Texans.

But the undue influence of the corporate world — through threat of boycott and economic blackmail — to disrupt the democratic process has accelerated. And it's starting to make me angry.

As Tim Carney explains in the Washington Examiner, big business has been teaming up with the political left in a coordinated assault against views it considers unacceptable. And in nearly every case, this powerful coalition seeks to strangle and quash perspectives that are — no surprise — conservative.

Freedom of conscience. Restrictions on abortion. Issues that divide the country, that are often complex and nuanced and should be addressed through an open and transparent democratic process, deserve no such hearing in the eyes of this unholy alliance.

Big businesses joined Democrats in declaring "it unacceptable for states to even allow individual small businessmen the freedom of conscience," writes Carney, referring to the Supreme Court case involving a Colorado baker who didn't want to make a specialty cake for a gay couple's wedding.

Major companies such as Disney, NBC Universal and Netflix are threatening to boycott Georgia if the state's new law restricting abortion goes into effect. "These incredibly powerful firms have concluded that the pro-life position is beyond the bounds of acceptable debate," Carney continues.

Indeed, these corporate leaders have determined that they are America's moral compass.

This past week, executives from 180 large corporations joined forces to rebuke anti-abortion measures in state legislatures around the country by issuing a joint statement under the odd title "Don't Ban Equality." If it's about workplace equality, why aren't they threatening bans of states that fail to provide paid maternity leave?

Liberals have complained in the past that business has unfettered power to exert influence in politics. It was the left that railed against the Supreme Court decisions in the Citizens United which broadened corporate speech protections. Yet leftists are very happy to join big business in its efforts to exert economic harm on states that pass laws with which they disagree.

Which brings us to a second irony: that the business world appears blissfully unfazed that half of the country — presumably half of their employees and clientele, as well — do not agree with positions adopted by corporate America. Abortion is no exception.

And for all their self-righteous condescension, big businesses seem unconcerned that the negative effects of their boycotts and other economic tactics will fall disproportionately on poor and minority populations of the states they target.

Corporate America is no longer in the pocket of "country club" Republicans. It's on board with the "woke" left.

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