March 22, 2017

WHAT NEIL GORSUCH LEARNED FROM KENNEDY, SCALIA AND THOMAS

Pray for civility, unity, and honest examination in the Senate Judiciary hearing of Judge Gorsuch. Pray for God’s will as to whether Judge Gorsuch should be confirmed.

_They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve (1 Tim. 3:10)_

If Judge Neil Gorsuch is confirmed to the Supreme Court, he will break one major precedent.

It will mark the first time a former clerk will take the bench while his one-time boss, Justice Anthony Kennedy, is still sitting.

The Supreme Court has played a major role in Gorsuch’s life, and the lessons he learned as a clerk -- from Kennedy and others -- endured long after his clerkship came to a close in 1994. It exposed him to Kennedy, who would serve as his mentor, but also Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, with whom he appears at times to be more closely aligned philosophically.

"A clerkship -- particularly a Supreme Court clerkship -- is often the formative mentorship relationship for a lawyer," said Carrie Severino, who clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas and is now chief counsel of the Judicial Crisis Network. "It is an opportunity for a young attorney, often just out of law school, to work closely with some of the most accomplished members of his field."

If confirmed, Gorsuch’s legal journey will come full circle and land him back at the institution that served as his launching pad into the law. Moreover, he would likely ensure a strong conservative block on the court for years to come, extending the legacies of Scalia and Thomas in particular.

Gorsuch will appear Monday before the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the full Senate is expected to vote on his nomination next month. (Contributor: By Ariane de Vogue for CNN)

Download: Free Judge Gorsuch prayer guide

SEIZING A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY

Thank God for the re-evaluation of the scope and size of the federal government. Pray that God would give wisdom to Pres. Trump and the Congress about the use of the taxpayers’ money.
Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor. (Eccl. 7:12)

“No government ever voluntarily reduces itself in size. Government programs, once launched, never disappear. Actually, a government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life we’ll ever see on this earth!”

— Ronald Reagan

President Trump presents his first budget to Congress on Thursday. It is, as The Washington Post points out, “historic” because if adopted, it would be the biggest contraction in the federal government since the end of World War II. Predictably, a Post story focuses on the number of federal workers it estimates could lose their jobs, rather than on whether those jobs and the programs associated with them are necessary.

The biggest drivers of debt remain entitlement programs and true to his campaign promise, the president is not touching those, at least for now. His challenge will be to ask Congress to eliminate failed programs, because too many members rely on campaign contributions from lobbyists with an interest in maintaining the status quo.

Some federal agencies have long practiced a policy of telling employees to find ways to spend leftover money at the end of a fiscal year for fear their budgets might be reduced. The practice is a contributing factor to government’s seemingly unstoppable growth.

While most proposals for cutting the size and cost of government tinker with spending at the edges while ignoring the main drivers of debt, a beginning can be made. If Republicans start with failed programs and present them as failures that waste taxpayer money, the public might come to trust them when it comes to the bigger things.

Patrick Louis Knudsen, a consultant and visiting fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank based in Washington, D.C., has authored a plan he says can save $42 billion just by eliminating bad government programs and initiating spending reductions in others that may still serve necessary functions.

Knudsen’s recommendations, made in 2013, do not take into account projected savings from changes in Obamacare, but they are a good beginning. Many programs could be managed as well, or better and at lower costs, by the private sector.

The U.S. government, notes Mr. Knudsen, contributes money to many international organizations, which could easily be financed by private capital, if anyone is interested in them. These include the International Coffee Organization, the International Copper Study Group, the International Cotton Advisory Committee, the International Grains Council, and my personal favorite, the International Lead and Zinc Study Group.

There are 18 Energy Department programs Mr. Knudsen says could be turned over to the private sector.

Familiar targets include privatizing Amtrak and eliminating all subsidies for the Public Broadcasting Service, which once served a valuable cultural purpose, but is today in an age of multiple TV choices as outdated as a VHS tape.

Space precludes naming more programs that could be cut, but visit Heritage.org and search for Mr. Knudsen’s report, which lists them all.
Cutting the size and cost of government is doable if the reductions are properly and skillfully presented to the public. Predictably, Democrats will howl about starving children because they always do, even when Republican proposals merely target the rate of spending increases without ever getting to real cuts.

Is there enough of our Puritan DNA left to eliminate waste? We’re about to find out. If a government headed by Republicans can’t, or won’t, live up to their philosophy of smaller government and more personal freedom, why do we need them? If unnecessary spending and needed entitlement reforms are not accomplished by Republicans, the spending will continue and the debt will grow until the inevitable economic collapse. (Contributor: By Cal Thomas for The Washington Times - Cal Thomas is a nationally syndicated columnist. His latest book is “What Works: Common Sense Solutions for a Stronger America” (Zondervan, 2014).)

Free Download: America First – A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again


FREEING RELIGION FROM GOVERNMENT’S GRIP

Pray for Pres. Trump to seek and follow God in everything and that he would sign the executive order guaranteeing religious freedom.

If anyone wants to do God’s will, he will know whether my teaching is from God or whether I merely speak on my own authority. A man who speaks on his own authority has an eye for his own reputation. But the man who is considering the glory of God who sent him is a true man. (Jn 7: 17-18 Phillips)

On Feb. 2, at the National Prayer Breakfast, President Trump said, "My administration will do everything in its power to defend and protect religious liberty."

Right now, he has a golden opportunity. He can sign an executive order that has been on his desk since early February that would halt some of the ongoing attacks on religious conscience all over the country.

The directive, reportedly called “Establishing a Government-Wide Initiative to Respect Religious Freedom,” would protect religious organizations’ right to their mission and beliefs when contracting with government, provide conscience protection from the Obamacare abortifacient and contraceptive mandate, and protect from penalties or coercion anyone who believes marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

You’ve probably heard about the Christian bakers, photographers, florists and wedding planners who have been fined heavily or put out of business for declining to service same-sex ceremonies. And the Little Sisters of the Poor, who have been threatened with ruin for declining to pay for abortions.

But did you hear about the law signed on Sept. 30 by California Gov. Jerry Brown that singles out religious colleges? They have to jump through hoops that other institutions are spared, simply because their beliefs are suspect in the eyes of the government.

An earlier draft would have victimized mostly minority students by barring Cal Grants to schools that failed to fly the flag of sexual anarchy. Public outrage killed this provision, but the law is still abhorrent — and unconstitutional.
“SB 1146 puts government in charge of religion, judging what is sin, love, moral, biblical, or proper,” says Randy Thomasson, president of SaveCalifornia.com, a pro-religious liberty group. "[It] begins the process of government taking over religion, a very dangerous precedent in a free society."

Government red tape is already a nightmare for businesses and schools, but SB 1146 puts the religious-based institutions in the sixth circle of the bureaucrats’ version of Dante’s Inferno. That’s the place reserved for heretics, and, make no mistake, that’s how progressives in California see Bible-believing Christians.

The law’s anti-privacy provisions “would force California’s religiously-affiliated colleges and universities to report four times a year on every expulsion and suspension of a student, and the reasons for the discipline,” according to the Becket Fund.

The law also requires “religious colleges to use government-dictated language to communicate their religious beliefs to their students, faculty, and communities,” Becket warns.

If that sounds more like North Korea than sunny California, it should. This is communist in spirit and substance.

In Madison, Wis., a city ordinance forces creative professionals to promote beliefs with which they disagree or face penalties. On March 7, Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) sued the city on behalf of photographer/blogger Amy Lynn, who says she conducts her business only in ways that glorify God. This means she thinks that marriage is the union of the two sexes and that abortions take human lives, and she reflects this in her blog posts and her provision of client services.

ADF attorneys note that the law is so broad and absurd that a Madison-based speechwriter who opposes President Trump could be punished for refusing to write a speech for him.

In Phoenix, Joanna Duka and Breanna Koski, who met at a Bible study, decided in January 2015 to open Brush & Nib Studio, creating hand-drawn art for weddings and businesses. Six months later, the Supreme Court legalized same-sex “marriage,” unleashing an avalanche of legal tools to crush Christian businesses under the heel of “tolerance.”

A Phoenix ordinance could require Brush & Nib to create invitations and other art for same-sex ceremonies. The law forbids them from explaining to customers and the public why they choose not to create art that violates their beliefs. If charged, for every day they defy the law, they’d be fined $2,500 and face six months in jail.

In March 2015, the Wyoming Commission on Judicial Conduct and Ethics accused Ruth Neely, a municipal judge and part-time circuit court magistrate, of judicial misconduct and recommended sacking her from both positions. Her crime? She told a reporter that she believes in traditional marriage and so she could not preside over same-sex ceremonies.

As the ADF, which represents her, points out, “Judge Neely has never been asked to solemnize a same-sex marriage, no law requires magistrates to serve as a celebrant for any marriage, magistrates may decline to perform weddings for a host of secular reasons, and Judge Neely has an unblemished record of integrity, impartiality, and scrupulous compliance with the law in her more than 21 years of judicial service.”

There are many more incidents, including several in the armed forces, which still harbor leftover Obama apparatchiks intent on weeding out Christians.
But let’s move on to solutions. President Trump should sign the executive order guaranteeing religious freedom. He should also overturn Mr. Obama’s order that discriminates against federal contractors who won’t bow to sexual anarchy. And, his new defense secretary, James Mattis, should issue a directive stopping cold the persecution of chaplains and others who are trying to live out their faith.

Given Mr. Trump’s own declarations and the support he received from evangelical Christians, 80 percent of whom voted for him, plus a majority of Catholics, none of this should be considered heavy lifting.

Besides, putting bullies in their place (Hollywood, the media) is actually quite freeing. (Contributor: By Robert Knight for The Washington Times - Robert Knight is a senior fellow for the American Civil Rights Union.)

**TRUMP KNOWS NOT TO CONFUSE ‘HEALTHCARE’ WITH ‘HEALTH INSURANCE’**

Keep praying for solutions to the healthcare crisis—for lower costs overall, for help for those who are not able to pay for needed medical services, for wisdom for our nation’s leaders who are trying to solve these problems.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Phil. 4:6)*

Since being sworn in as the 45th president of the United States, Trump has worked hard to deliver on the many campaign promises he made to the American people. And despite Democrats, and even some Republicans, challenging him at every corner, he has pushed forward to implement the people’s agenda.

Business owners like me know first-hand of the negative impacts of the Affordable Care Act and the soaring costs. Many owners of medium-size and small-size businesses have had to either let people go or stop hiring people due to the mandated healthcare passed by Democrats. And it’s even worse for the individual, forcing some people to lose their health insurance plan altogether because of the rising cost of premiums.

Health insurance is not healthcare. People can afford healthcare, but they can’t afford health insurance. In its current form, the Affordable Care Act doesn’t address the number one issue, which is tackling cost. Our health insurance market lacks market-based solutions that create competition, which benefits the consumer.

The ability to purchase healthcare across state lines and greater incentives for younger, healthier people to buy insurance would create a sustainable system, where we all would benefit. However, to do that effectively, we should remove employer and individual mandates. Medicaid should also be reformed because every state has a different program. Healthcare should not be limited to your state because competition keeps the cost down and what we don’t have now is competition, which is one of the areas the president’s plan seeks to rectify.

This is the beginning of turning back very bad legislation that has had six years to unfold. Much damage has been done and it will take more time and thoughtful correction to get us on the right track. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said we had to pass ObamaCare to see what was in it. Well, it was passed and what is in it has proven to be skyrocketing costs for the everyday person and a law that gets in the middle of individuals and their private healthcare provider.
Medicaid is the third largest budget item for the federal government and it acts as both an expenditure and the largest source of federal revenue in state budgets, yet we know just having an insurance card does not ensure timely treatment. Right not, expanding Medicaid means expanding inferior insurance. We have to reform Medicaid, which has become a system close to bankrupting states.

Each state has different healthcare environment and instead of Washington bureaucrats making decisions, we should empower each state to make decisions that benefit the needs of their individual state.

No state population is the same. We should block grant Medicaid, allowing states to manage it, and for example, allow individuals to purchase their own policies through health savings accounts (HSAs). This would give the power back to the people and take it away from the federal government.

Competition drives cost down and quality of services up, which is why it's essential that we reform the Affordable Care Act and let the free market work for all, not just some and this is something we can do if we successfully repeal and replace ObamaCare.

Insurance companies have become the "doctor," controlling much of what physicians can and cannot do. This was not supposed to be healthcare in America. It is something you see in countries such as Canada and Great Britain and it is a system that is unsustainable and won't work.

In Canada, for instance, it could take weeks and sometimes even months for simple procedures and is evidence that government controlled healthcare doesn’t work. The Canadian government spends a significant portion of their GDP on healthcare instead of other necessary needs. This is something that many doubt the American people would stand for because the result could be devastating for many of the programs we as Americans have become accustomed to.

We have allowed the bureaucrats to confuse health insurance with healthcare. Insurance is a purely fiscal medium. Its purpose is to protect the loss of your assets if you were to need an expensive medical treatment. Obviously, if you don’t have any assets to protect (i.e. you are poor), there is no reason to have health insurance. If you get sick, you need healthcare, not health insurance.

The benevolent government's role is identifying who should qualify for free medical care and what services should be provided. Forcing the working poor to pay for high deductible insurance plan is a burden that brings no benefit (since there are no assets to protect). Insurance for the working poor simply drives up the cost of care.

We must allow health insurance to be free again. Currently, the federal government mandates that insurance is packaged a certain way (making it very expensive) and forces American citizens to buy it. This leads to an overly expensive product that many do not want, but are forced to buy. According to the recent CBO analysis of the GOP health plan, the number of the uninsured will rise by 24 million. Is it any surprise that with the elimination of the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate that the number of uninsured will go up? This simply tells us that even when heavily subsidized, the people still don't want it, unless they are forced to buy it.

We must allow the doctor/patient relationship to work again, which is exactly what President Trump is attempting to do by repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act. It won’t be a quick fixed and the results won’t be immediate, but in due time the American people will be back in control of their healthcare and we'll once again have government out of patient/doctor relationships. (Contributor: By Armstrong Williams for The Hill - Armstrong Williams served as an advisor and spokesman for Dr. Ben Carson's
presidential campaign. He is Manager and Sole Owner of Howard Stirk Holdings I & II Broadcast Television Stations and the 2016 Multicultural Media Broadcast Owner of the year.)