

## EDITORIAL BOARD

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sfoster@tallahassee.com

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# Zing!

READERS' OPINIONS  
STATED SUCCINCTLY

I also have difficulty remembering strange meetings with shadowy, casually dressed developers from out of town.

Thanks for nothing, Tallahassee. Now my own mother has vague memories of me. Yours truly, Mike Miller.

One day Aramis Ayala will be praised like Rosa Parks.

When the president said that he'd create jobs, I didn't realize that it was for all the lawyers people in the White House are hiring.

Trump likes to point out Abraham Lincoln was a Republican. I would like to point out their similarities end there.

Now playing in GOP strongholds across the country: “Collusion is the New Black.”

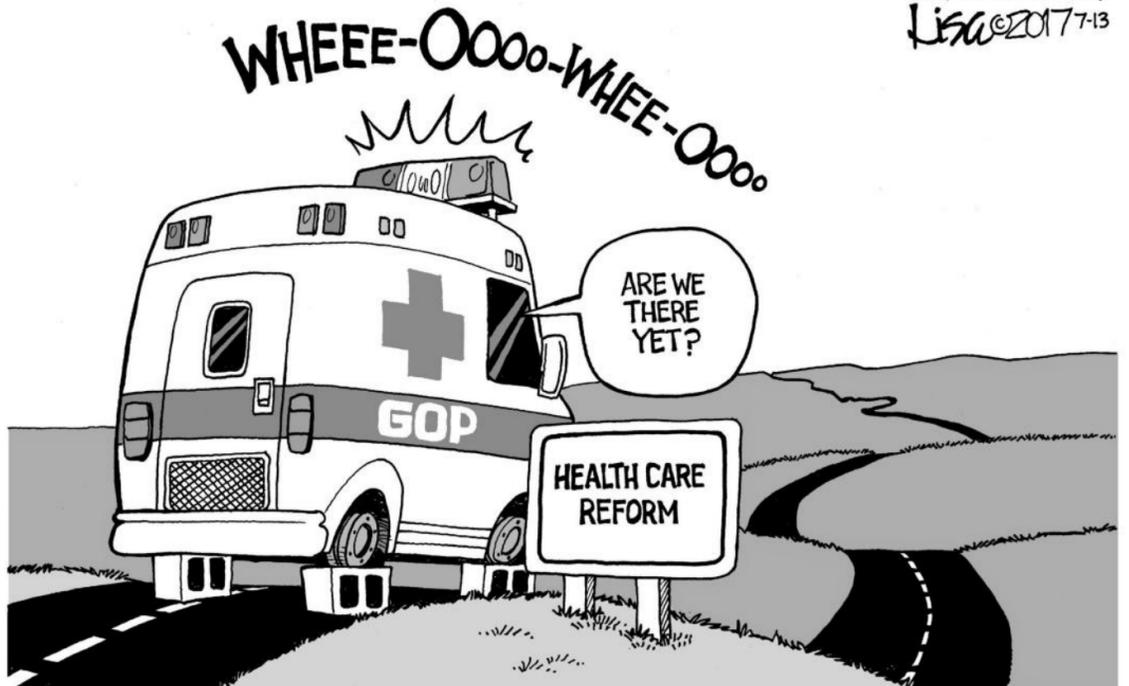
Deplorables, snowflakes and fruitcakes are all Americans; we just aren't acting like it, right now.

If Junior is found guilty, Dad will give him a pardon and send him to bed without his dinner.

The R's after some politicians' names seem to stand for Russian.

Coexist. (Except with jerks.)

And palmetto bugs. They can hang out with the jerks. Visit [Tallahassee.com/zing](http://Tallahassee.com/zing) to submit your Zing! and check out the Zing! blog at [Tallahassee.com](http://Tallahassee.com).



LISA BENSON/WASHINGTON POST WRITERS GROUP

## Exploitation abuse of elderly has become a multi-billion dollar industry



### Robert Weiner and Christina McDowell

MY VIEW

Nearly 20 percent of Florida's population is 65 years or older, the highest in the nation. As the Baby Boomers move into retirement, internet scams against the elderly are increasing.

Boomers are targeted not just because of the wealth many accumulated in the '90s, but because they are a higher population of homeowners and people with savings and pensions. Sadly, scam artists know that with advanced age comes a higher chance of cognitive decline, physical disability, isolation and health problems, making a senior more vulnerable.

Elderly financial exploitation has become a multi-billion dollar industry. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau reported that more than three million Americans over the age of 60 are victims of financial fraud annually. Most cases go unreported. Too often feelings of embarrassment and shame accompany the crime. The U.S. has no mechanism to

track elderly financial exploitation. Estimated losses range anywhere from \$2.9 billion to as high as \$36.5 billion.

Financial exploitation is the most common form of elderly abuse. Common scams listed under the National Adult Protective Services Association include:

- » Lottery and sweepstakes: You've won! Just send money for taxes;
- » Grandparents scam: that email from your grandchild who's out of the country and their wallet was stolen, begging you to send a wire transfer;
- » Telemarketing scams: a call from the "IRS" saying you owe money;
- » Con men who want to fix your roof or car for cash.

On April 27, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Information announced eight individuals had been arrested in Miami for fraud in IRS phone scams. The IRS made it clear: "No legitimate employee of the United States Treasury Department or the Internal Revenue Service will demand that anyone make payments via Moneygram, Western Union, Walmart2Walmart money transfer, or any other money wiring method, for any debt to the IRS or the Department of the Treasury."

Individuals can report scams at [treasury.gov](http://treasury.gov). The Senate Aging Committee also has a fraud reporting hotline: 1-855-303-9470.

In 2014, Florida passed a law to prevent "exploitation of an elderly person or disabled adult," making it easier for prosecutors to go after predators and increase penalties for crimes against the elderly.

Despite the new law, as of February, 2017, a man prosecuted for stealing a Tampa resident's life savings was only paying \$200 monthly restitution. It will take 39 years for the \$96,000 to be repaid to the victims. This does not feel like justice.

The reality is there are few resources designated to the rise in scam crime against older Americans. States are beginning to implement laws mandating elderly financial exploitation be reported, and have seen a sharp rise in numbers. States hope to address the issue with more urgency and collaboration with law enforcement, banks and accountants.

Nearly every day, the elderly get messages purporting to be "Yahoo technical support" or "AT&T messaging service," always with a clickable link. Don't do it!

Bottom line: With the dramatic increases in scams against the elderly, Congress, state Houses, and the private sector have a lot more work to do.

Robert Weiner is the former chief of staff of the U.S. House Aging Committee under Rep. Claude Pepper. Christina McDowell is the author of "After Perfect: A Daughter's Memoir" concerning her father, who was arrested and imprisoned for scams.

## Donald Trump Jr. Russia emails trap president, his whole circus



### Gabriel Schoenfeld

MY VIEW

By releasing a damning email exchange from last year revealing his own eagerness to take help from the Russian government to elect his father, Donald Trump Jr. has brought us to a watershed moment. One of the dikes blocking public understanding of the story line of potential collusion has given way. A flood of further incriminating evidence is now almost certain to follow.

President Trump is in a bind. Even if he were a model of rationality (which he is not), and even if he had retained the finest Washington attorneys to advise him (which he has not), he is confronted by impossible choices. After all, to state the obvious, Donald Jr. is his son. Jared Kushner, also tangled in the web, is his son-in-law. Even if the president himself is not implicated in the Russia trap, would he throw them under the bus? And if he is implicated, he cannot throw them there without getting crushed himself.

Caught in this predicament, Trump could lash out and sack the special counsel Robert Mueller, sparking a major crisis. Perhaps, recalling the applause he garnered by launching cruise missiles at Syria, he will start a diversionary conflict somewhere abroad. It is impossible to predict Trump's future

direction or gauge how long his damaged presidency might linger on.

To begin with the Republican Party, corrupt is hardly an adequate description of an organization that so readily jettisoned its core principles for their antitheses. Degenerate is perhaps a more appropriate word. A party that a mere two years ago stood for economic and personal liberty and saw itself as a defender of the Constitution followed a demagogue down the path toward protectionism, nativism, ethnic and religious bigotry and much else that is anti-Constitutional and on the dark side of American life.

Much of the impetus for this shift came from the ideological far right, with Breitbart News and its former proprietor Steve Bannon among its leading lights. But what is far more significant is how eagerly mainstream Republicans followed suit. Figures like Reince Priebus and Sean Spicer, cogs in the White House machinery who today seamlessly defend Trump and his lies, did not come to Trump World from the fever swamps of Breitbart News. They are from the heart of the GOP apparatus, the Republican National Committee, where only yesterday — in the aftermath of Mitt Romney's 2012 defeat — they were preaching moderation and inclusiveness.

Employing their skills to rationalize Trump's fabrications, his misogyny, his debasement of discourse and language, and his strange admiration for and acquiescence to Vladimir Putin, these apparatchiks have compromised them-



Donald Trump Jr., left, is interviewed by host Sean Hannity on his Fox News Channel television program Tuesday.

selves even more than Trump's band of true believers. There is no going back. The latter — figures like Jeffrey Lord, Kayleigh McEnany, and Katrina Pierson — have come to resemble a cult of unswerving loyalty to Trump and the Trump line.

Although some of them are less fa-

miliar to the broader public, the conservative intellectuals who puffed Trump up into something he is not will also have to make their choices. William J. Bennett, author of "The Book of Virtues," shows no signs of withdrawing his support from a president who is depraved. Fervent Trump backer David Gelernter of Yale has yet to retract his breathtaking discovery of virtue in Trump's vulgarity: "Nothing can stop Mr. Trump from shooting off his mouth," Gelernter writes, "but that's all right, I want America's enemies off-balance and guessing." Roger Kimball, editor of the highbrow journal *The New Criterion*, opined this very week that our sub-literate president is an orator on a par with Pericles of Athens.

As the Russian collusion story enters a new and perhaps decisive phase, it would not be surprising to see these intellectuals, along with the political operatives and politicians, stick with Trump to the bitter end. Having wandered into the muck, they are loath to admit how badly they've soiled themselves, let alone turn back. Their dilemma is quite similar to the one their hero now faces as the lies unravel and the truth comes to light. They have no good choices. The rest of us can take satisfaction that the ship of fools has run aground.

Gabriel Schoenfeld, a member of USA TODAY's Board of Contributors and the author of "Necessary Secrets: National Security, the Media, and the Rule of Law," was a senior adviser to the 2012 Romney for President campaign.