

Cato Policy Report

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“To Be Governed...”

UH-HUH

A group of Stanford University professors is pushing to end a system that allows students to anonymously report classmates for exhibiting discrimination or bias, saying it threatens free speech on campus.

The backlash began last month, when a student reading “Mein Kampf,” the autobiographical manifesto of Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler, was reported through the school’s “Protected Identity Harm” system. . . .

The system is designed to help students get along with one another, said Dee Mostofi, a Stanford spokeswoman.

— *Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2023

CHIPS AND SALSA WOULD HAVE BEEN A BETTER DEAL

By now it’s clear that the Chips and Science Act—which includes a \$52 billion splurge for the semiconductor industry—is unlikely to work as intended. . . .

Significant policy changes would be needed for US-based manufacturers to be even remotely competitive. As things stand, they face three serious impediments—all inflicted by the government.

Chief among them is red tape. . . . the US lacks the needed workforce for this industry, thanks partly to a broken immigration system. . . .

A final concern is politics. Companies hoping for significant Chips Act funding must comply with an array of new government rules and pointed suggestions, meant to advantage labor unions, favored demographics, “empowered community partners” and the like. They should also be prepared to offer “community investment,” employee “wrap-around services,” access to “affordable, accessible, reliable and high-quality child care,” and much else.

— *Bloomberg*, March 28, 2023

PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO SEEK EVERYTHING WHEN THEY DON’T HAVE TO PAY FOR IT

It is common sense—buttressed by numerous studies—that people are more likely to seek preventive care when they don’t have to pay out of pocket for it.

— *Ruth Marcus in the Washington Post*, March 31, 2023

THE MODERATE CANDIDATE

President Biden on Thursday unveiled a 2024 budget proposal that revived his calls for massive new social spending and tax hikes.

— *Washington Post*, March 9, 2023

SHOCKING: SPECIAL INTERESTS CIRCLING AROUND A NEW POT OF TAXPAYERS’ MONEY

Washington is ready to unleash an unprecedented \$52 billion to support the domestic microchip industry—and a startling array of companies are angling for a payday, some with an unclear connection to microchips.

— *Politico*, March 17, 2023

SAN FRANCISCO HAS HAD IT WITH CRIME AND DISORDER

[San Francisco] City inspectors recently went after a Little Free Library.

“Remove unpermitted encroachments from public right of way,” ordered a city notice to Susan and Joe Meyers, unless they applied within 30 days for a \$1,402 “Minor Sidewalk Encroachment Permit” to keep the library and a bench they built in front of their Victorian in the Lower Pacific Heights neighborhood.

— *Wall Street Journal*, March 26, 2023

IF ONLY THERE WERE A SYSTEM FOR MAKING BETTER DECISIONS

The D.C. Housing Authority [DCHA] pays \$2,467 in monthly rent for Simpson to live there, but his apartment at the Havana was never worth that, even when new. One real estate consulting firm recently put the median market rent for one-bedrooms in the area at \$1,613.

DCHA agreed to the amount anyway, because it doesn’t check to ensure rents it pays on behalf of low-income voucher holders are in line with market prices, as required by local and federal regulations. As a result, the agency overpays landlords by millions of dollars every year, a Washington Post investigation found.

— *Washington Post*, February 16, 2023

The intentions of Spanish public railway operator, Renfe, were good: to renovate the 40-year-old railway fleet, increasingly subject to damage, in the regions of Cantabria and Asturias in the country’s north. But the miscalculation that crept into the order details could cost Renfe dearly. The specified dimensions of the trains were too large.

So much larger in fact that if Basque railway manufacturer CAF had simply followed the instructions provided by Renfe in 2020, when it won the tender, the 31 trains it would have delivered would not have been able to fit through the tunnels. While the manufacturer came to the realization relatively early during the design stage, the delivery will still be delayed by two to three years and the project, initially estimated at €258 million, will suffer a massive yet-to-be-determined cost blowout.

— *Le Monde*, February 10, 2023