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~ Harry S. Truman



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May 21, 2021

Next TV

Communities nationwide are preparing for an influx of COVID-19 relief funding from the federal government. Beaver County officials are already making plans

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to spend a significant portion of the \$92 million it will receive on improving broadband access.

According to the FCC, more than 90 percent of residents in Beaver County have broadband access. But county commissioner Jack Manning said reliability is a significant issue in rural areas and price is a problem for lower income residents. "For me to do Zoom calls or Zoom meetings? It was very challenging at certain times of the day," Manning said.

Manning, like millions of others, started working from home as a result of the pandemic. "I have DSL. That's all they have where I live. It's totally unreliable," he said. Manning said in many cases, internet service is difficult to access, not consistent and expensive to buy. The county is partnering with Michael Baker International to talk with people about issues. "We have folks that are off the road 500, 600 feet or even 1,000 feet. Those are the major areas of concern for connectivity," Jeremy Jurick with Michael Baker said. The county said the system could start being upgraded by next spring. – ***WPXI-TV, Pittsburgh***

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A company that makes productivity software has enacted policies to curtail workplace discussions of politics. The tech firm Basecamp employs only about 60 people. It doesn't play in the same league as the Apples and Microsofts of the world, and yet in late April the company found itself center stage in a heated national conversation about workplace rules and whether companies should regulate what employees talk about during work hours.

The company has the legal right to regulate what if any topics are off the table. However, banning certain topics is suppressing speech and, arguably, association. There are less drastic approaches the company could and should have taken to refocus employee conversations. These days it seems like politics have invaded every aspect of daily life, from news to sports to entertainment to the workplace. Attempting to restore the sanctity of the metaphorical water cooler would provide a respite from the political heat of the day and help keep employees focused more completely on work. If Basecamp executives had merely asked employees to keep discussions focused on work, many employees might have felt relieved at not feeling pressured to talk politics at work.

Instead, it outright banned political discussions. "No more societal and political discussions on our company Basecamp account" is one of several new rules at the company, as such discussions are "a major distraction," according to company co-founder Jason Fried. (Employees are still allowed to discuss whatever they so choose privately or publicly on their own time and on their own channels.)

Within a week of the announced policy change, about 20 people, a third of the company's workforce, had either resigned or announced their intentions to resign on social media to protest the new rule. This is understandable: Who wants to work for a company that tells employees what they can and can't talk about?

A suggestion or recommendation would have been far more productive than a ban. Basecamp's function is to provide a service and provide it well. If political discussions are interfering with that function, then the founders are within their rights to try and steer back to more fruitful ground. Banning certain topics outright is overly restrictive, but pushing toward a calmer, more productive workplace by encouraging workplace discussions that are focused on work is a reasonable goal for any company. An outright ban goes too far. – ***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette editorial***

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Clout called a draw last week when Bill McSwain and Josh Shapiro [engaged in a little early gubernatorial race pugilism](#), using Philadelphia's Democratic primary for district attorney as the ring. But McSwain came back for another round. And this time he connected with a jab.

McSwain, the former U.S. attorney in Philadelphia and [a likely 2022 Republican candidate for governor](#), threw the first punch, challenging Shapiro, the state attorney general [widely seen as the early Democratic front-runner](#), to take a stand in the contest between DA Larry Krasner and challenger Carlos Vega. It was a political squeeze: If Shapiro sided with Krasner, he'd align with the uber-progressive prosecutor whose [reform policies](#) might not play well in some of Pennsylvania. If Shapiro endorsed Vega, he'd face the wrath of [progressives](#).

Shapiro appeared to duck the punch. A spokesperson said he never endorses in DA races because, as the state's top law enforcement official, he has to work with the winner either way. McSwain called that "a cop-out." But then he ducked when asked if he accepts that [Pennsylvania's 2020 results were valid](#). Acknowledging that reality could anger supporters of former President Donald Trump, [who continues to push the Big Lie](#) that the election was stolen. Saying no could raise questions about McSwain's grasp of reality. Hence, the draw. But then McSwain's camp found a [26-second Facebook video](#) from 2019. In it, Shapiro says, "I'm asking you to vote for my friend Lisa Lazzari-Strasiser" for district attorney in Somerset County. Down goes Shapiro.

Will Simons, a Shapiro spokesperson, apologized for not being more clear in his initial statement, saying this week that Shapiro doesn't endorse in *primary* races, and drawing a distinction between endorsing in a general election and choosing between fellow Democrats. "He's never endorsed in a primary for DA and that's not going to change now," Simons said this week.

Shapiro has taken sides in other Dem vs. Dem races, including for Scranton mayor. DA races are different because Shapiro has to work with the winner no matter what, Simons said. But that still doesn't explain why Shapiro raised his voice in the Somerset County race, since he ultimately had to work with the Republican who won. McSwain on Wednesday [tried to pin Krasner's win on Shapiro](#), tweeting "Congratulations, @JoshShapiroPA, for getting Larry Krasner reelected as Philly DA. You showed a lot of courage. Shapiro/Krasner 2022!"

Here, Clout rules that McSwain over-swung. [Krasner won in a rout](#). And it's hard to believe Shapiro's voice would have had much effect either way. But that's not the point. McSwain is looking for a liberal foil to pin to Shapiro. If that tweet is anything to go by, this isn't the last we'll hear about the Philly DA in the governor's race. – **Chris Brennan's "Clout" column in Philadelphia Daily News**

