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[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette In Pittsburgh's Strip District, Facebook pushing to make avatars that can talk, smile and do what you do](#)

They may share the same first name, but there are few other similarities between Disney Chairman Bob Iger and his successor as chief executive, Bob Chapek. While Mr. Iger is known for being charismatic and cosmopolitan and loves to hobnob, Mr. Chapek is all business with little time or interest in niceties, people who have worked closely with both say. "A meal with Bob Chapek is one minute and 30 seconds of pleasantries and 58 minutes and 30 seconds of business," said a former high-ranking Disney executive.

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Current and former Walt Disney Co. executives agree that Mr. Chapek, 60 years old, has the experience and skill set to succeed Mr. Iger at the Magic Kingdom. "Bob Chapek doesn't fail. He is incredibly disciplined about doing what it takes to deliver the numbers," the former executive said. "He is relentless in that regard." As a skilled tactician, Mr. Chapek (pronounced "CHAY-peck") clearly identifies targets and looks for ways to achieve his metrics.

During Mr. Chapek's tenure as head of the parks and resorts division, from 2015 until earlier this week, he amassed five consecutive years of growth, thanks to a combination of historic expansion and strategic cost reductions. He prioritized double-digit annual growth, according to one former colleague, a goal he achieved in all but one year, when the division's operating income grew 9%.

[Announcing Mr. Chapek's elevation](#) a little more than two weeks before the company's annual meeting, scheduled for March 11, means the company won't have to answer questions from shareholders about succession planning. Many who have worked closely with Mr. Chapek during his 27 years at Disney appreciate what they describe as his direct and blunt personality. "There's no drama," another former Disney executive said.

Like Mr. Iger, Mr. Chapek shares a love for all things Disney. At a town hall welcoming Fox employees after Disney acquired most of 21st Century Fox's entertainment assets, Mr. Chapek's enthusiasm made a strong impression on the newest "cast members," as the company calls employees. He spoke passionately about the theme parks and the Disney brand with an energy that was matched only by Mr. Iger's, one attendee said. Mr., Chapek's résumé doesn't include oversight of as many creative parts of the company as Mr. Iger's did when he landed the top job in 2005. But during the course of his career, he has worked closely with both the movie and television teams at Disney when he headed home entertainment.

In an interview Tuesday, Mr. Chapek acknowledged that film and television production was one area in which he would have to immerse himself. His theme-park and home-entertainment stints provided an education, he said. "Given that our only product is a creative product, I've been completely immersed in editing and looking at product and giving notes on product my entire Disney career," he said. Storytelling, he added, is "actually something I feel very comfortable with."

In his 18 years at Disney's film studio, Mr. Chapek was known among colleagues and others in the industry for a focus on data and business execution, rather than worrying about relationships with the creative community and business partners. When he ran home video from 2006 to 2009, he championed a highly lucrative "moratorium" strategy in which Disney would make movies unavailable for a while and then rerelease them with much fanfare.

In recent years, Mr. Iger communicated to Mr. Chapek that he might be in line to become CEO, according to another former senior executive. Mr. Chapek emerged as the clear choice for the top job, beating out at least one potential rival inside the company: Kevin Mayer, who now oversees Disney's direct-to-consumer operations, including its Disney+ streaming service. Some believe that when it comes to creative matters, Mr. Chapek will be in a listen-and-learn mode for the next 22 months, while Mr. Iger remains as executive chairman, focusing on Disney's creative operations until his employment contract ends in December 2021. "In many respects,

it's like Iger named a COO," said Peter Crist, chairman of executive recruitment firm Crist Kolder Associates.

In a conference call Tuesday with analysts, Mr. Iger dismissed the notion of naming a permanent head of creative affairs to manage Disney's various brands, including Pixar and Marvel. "If we named a chief creative officer, that would imply we had a need, and I don't think that's the case," he said. Mr. Chapek, who has been married for 38 years, has three adult children and three grandchildren. His son has worked at Marvel Studios since 2013, according to a regulatory disclosure from the company.

Many who have worked closely with Mr. Chapek say that he lets his guard down around those he is familiar with and trusts. One former subordinate said despite the "external veneer of seriousness, he's a nice, fun guy." Mr. Chapek said on the call with analysts that his relationship with Disney started during his childhood in Hammond, Ind. His parents would take the family on annual vacations at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla. "That's where I first developed a deep love for Disney and what it stands for," he said. — *Wall Street Journal*

A federal appeals court in California on Wednesday ruled that privately operated internet platforms are free to censor content they don't like. Though not unexpected, the unanimous decision by the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco marks the most emphatic rejection of the argument advanced in some conservative circles that YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and other giant tech platforms are bound by the First Amendment.

The case concerned a YouTube channel operated by Prager University, a nonprofit founded by talk-radio host Dennis Prager that produces short explainer videos promoting conservative ideas. In 2017, [PragerU sued YouTube](#) and its parent, Alphabet Inc.'s Google, after YouTube flagged dozens of its videos as "inappropriate," stripping the clips of advertising and making them less accessible to students, library users and children.

PragerU [contended there was nothing offensive](#) about the restricted clips—with such titles as "Why Isn't Communism as Hated as Nazism?," "Why Did America Fight the Korean War?" and "Are 1 in 5 Women Raped at College?"—and that it was a victim of viewpoint discrimination in violation of the First Amendment. It argued that YouTube has essentially turned itself into the operator of a giant public square, a government-like role it says warrants more legal scrutiny of the platform's content moderation.

PragerU brought a similar lawsuit in California state court. "Obviously, we are disappointed," said PragerU attorney Peter Obstler. "We will continue to pursue PragerU's claims of overt discrimination on YouTube in the state court case under California's heightened antidiscrimination, free-speech and consumer-contract law." Google, echoing the wider tech industry, argued that allowing PragerU to pursue a constitutional claim would have "disastrous consequences" for the First Amendment and online discourse.

The feud is part of a wider debate around speech rights in the digital age, where a few giant tech firms own and police the country's core mediums of communication. No court has endorsed PragerU's legal argument. As a general rule, the First Amendment's speech protections put constraints on government, not the private sector. Exceptions are rare. In one such case, the Supreme Court in 1946 ruled that a Jehovah's Witness had the right to

hand out pamphlets on a sidewalk that was the property of a shipbuilding firm, in an Alabama suburb.

The Ninth Circuit was emphatic: This case was no exception. “Despite YouTube’s ubiquity and its role as a public-facing platform, it remains a private forum, not a public forum subject to judicial scrutiny under the First Amendment,” wrote Circuit Judge M. Margaret McKeown for the three-judge panel, affirming an earlier lower-court ruling. Circuit Judge McKeown also stated that YouTube’s “braggadocio about its commitment to free speech” doesn’t expose it to a federal false-advertising claim. “Google’s products are not politically biased,” Farshad Shadloo, a YouTube spokesperson, said in a statement Wednesday. “PragerU’s allegations were meritless, both factually and legally, and the court’s ruling vindicates important legal principles that allow us to provide different choices and settings to users.” – *Wall Street Journal*

Ask yourself three questions. Does the current primary process make sense? Has the Democratic Party lost its mind? Will politics ever seem normal again?

My own answers? No, yes and I don’t see how but I sure hope so. Here’s why.

The primary process is wacko. It’s too long. It’s front-loaded with small states given too much weight. It features stupid caucuses where they can’t even count the votes. The solution? Change it. Slice the country into fourths modeled on the time zones (toss Alaska and Hawaii into the Pacific zone). Hold four regional primaries in March and April two weeks apart. Rotate the regions every presidential cycle.

This compacts the campaign. It’s more representative than the current mishmash. It offers variety in each region. And we’re done in four days. Too late, of course, for this year. And, as a result, Democrats appear headed to a Super Tuesday likely to be super bad for their chances of unseating President Trump (and I don’t mean in a fun way like the 2007 teen/comedy film *Superbad*).

If polling in key states among the 14 states holding primaries on Tuesday is to be believed, Vermont’s Independent-but-caucuses-with-Democrats Sen. Bernie Sanders is positioned to win. Know how many winners of Super Tuesday, which started in 1984, went on to win their party nomination? The answer is **17 out of 18**.

And the 18th was Democrat Gary Hart. And, no, old-timers and political junkies, his 1984 Super Tuesday loss was not because of “**Monkey Business**” (the yacht he took to Bimini in the company of a woman who was not his wife). That did him in during the 1988 election cycle. Anyhow, my point regarding the 17 of 18 is history says whoever wins on Super Tuesday is probably, even almost certainly, going to be the nominee.

This gets to the question of whether the Democratic Party has lost its mind. The evidence supports an affirmative answer. The evidence shows the party positioning itself to lose to an unpopular and impeached president, **whose base the Democrats actually strengthened by impeaching him**. Also, Democrats appear ready to nominate a self-described Democratic socialist who supports decriminalized border-crossings, ending private health

insurance, giving health benefits to undocumented immigrants and imposing a total ban on fracking.

These positions, let's be honest, mostly appeal to only a slice of the Democratic base. And calling for [a fracking ban in Pennsylvania](#), considered a critical 2020 state, is like calling for defeat in Pennsylvania. Plus, Democrats find themselves in this self-made mess despite repeated warnings from smart, successful Democratic leaders. [Nancy Pelosi last May warned against an impeachment effort](#) Republicans could stop in the Senate, and told Democratic presidential candidates to "own the mainstream."

[Barack Obama](#) last November warned that average voters don't align with the views of "the activist wing of our party." And [Ed Rendell](#), arguably Pennsylvania's smartest, most successful Democratic pol, and a past party national chair, said, in November 2018, if Democrats continue tracking left, "We surely will see another four years of President Trump." Now maybe, as many Democrats believe and as current [Sanders v. Trump polls](#) suggest, the Vermont Senator would beat Trump in November.

Maybe there are enough voters who want anyone but Trump. Maybe many would pick Sanders, while not agreeing with his views, on grounds he'll never find the money or House and Senate support to implement the bulk, or any, of his agenda. One can envision votes for a one-term placeholder presidency with few expectations beyond do-no-harm and a hope for return to political normalcy, whatever that is or ever was.

But one also can envision a divided Democratic Party struggling against a Trump campaign that paints Sanders as an extremist admirer of the late Fidel Castro, a fan of communism, a social experimenter out to raise taxes, redistribute wealth and bring down capitalism. If Tuesday's results are as expected and nothing alters Sanders' path, such a campaign would be majorly, even bigly, super bad for Democrats. – John Baer's column in *Harrisburg Patriot-News*

