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Musk backs a longshot with his America Party

oday, the America Party is formed to give you back your freedom," Elon Musk declared on his social media platform, X (formerly Twitter).

Another billionaire quickly replied on his social media platform, "I am saddened to watch Elon Musk go completely 'off the rails,' essentially becoming a TRAIN WRECK over the past five weeks," President Trump wrote on Truth Social on Sunday night. "He even wants to start a Third Political Party, despite the fact that they have never succeeded in the United States.'

If I had to guess, Elon Musk's America Party will go nowhere. I wouldn't be surprised if he doesn't even file the required paperwork — the amount is so large it could probably be seen from space. And that's just one of the daunting challenges facing third parties.

Still, Trump is wrong. He is, after all, the head of the most successful third party in American history. The Republican Party was born in Ripon, Wisconsin, in 1854. Two years later, the Republican candidate for president, John Frémont, carried 11 (out of 31) states. Four



years after that, Abraham Lincoln became the first Republican president, and the Whigs soon went the way of the dinosaurs. But other than that lasting success — if measured by capturing the White House or being a major force beyond an election cycle or two — the record of third parties is not great. The primary reason for this is structural. Our firstpast-the-post system for declaring a winner makes voting third party seem like a wasted

But that doesn't mean third parties don't matter. Teddy Roosevelt's 1912 Bull Moose Party split the Republicans and put Woodrow Wilson (the worst president of the 20th century) in office. People still debate whether Ross Perot's Reform Party doomed George H.W. Bush's 1992 reelection; Ralph Nader's 2000 Green Party run almost certainly cost Al Gore

Florida, and hence the electoral college and the presidency.

That's why political historian Richard Hofstadter's famous verdict on third parties is so enduring: "Third parties are like bees: Once they have stung,

Musk is ill-suited to replay the role of Perot, although both fit the description "erratic billionaire." As an immigrant, Musk can't run for president himself, as Perot did. This matters because if Musk is serious about the America Party, he'll have to find quality candidates to carry its banner. Given his toxicity among Democrats, and Trump's ongoing effort to anathematize him, that might prove difficult.

The mid-19th century success of what was then a Grand New Party stemmed from the split among the Whigs over slavery, and slavery was the defining issue of the times. The country needed an anti-slavery party. The Republican Party was created to meet market demand.

You could say the same in 2025; the demand is there. A majority of Americans have wanted a third party for decades. But desire is not enough. A third party's success will be defined by specific issues. Is it for or against abortion rights? Does it see debt and deficits as Musk does (and I do too) or as Bernie Sanders does? We don't know the specifics yet, or if the America Party will even get that far.

Musk appears to believe that the country is much less divided on issues than the parties and media would have us believe. I think there's something to that. The intense partisan polarization of the last quarter-century is driven less by ideological commitment than by tribalized hatred of Republicans and Democrats for the other party. When presidents change their party's policy stances, most partisans change with them. For instance, Trump changed the GOP's position on trade, and formerly pro-trade Republicans moved with him. And in a sense so have Democrats, although in the opposite direction. When Trump is for something, many Democrats suddenly oppose it.

Hyperpartisans want hyperpartisanship. But Musk's theory is that there is a middle 60% or 70% sufficiently sick of hyperpartisanship to stick

their thumbs in the eyes of both parties.

That's where I'm skeptical. Still, Musk's strategy to test the proposition seems like the right one. He says the America Party will concentrate "on just 2 or 3 Senate seats and 8 to 10 House districts." Given the incredibly narrow margins in Congress, if those contests break for Musk it could be enough to profoundly change the political dynamics in both houses.

If decisive votes for legislation were held by America Party members, that translates to enormous power to shape legislation. Forcing Congress to get back into the business of crossing party lines to form factional coalitions would be a very healthy improvement.

Again, the actual issues would matter enormously, as does Musk's ability to harness his outrage into organizing a party structure. But popular dissatisfaction with Democrats and Republicans is so great, stinging each might actually work for just enough candidates to matter.

Jonah Goldberg is a national columnist. ©2025 Tribune Content Agency,

AMERICAN OPINION

Texas floods bring out the best, and worst, of us

BOSTON HERALD

ragedies bring out the best in people — at least that's the assumption of a decent society. For some, however, the misfortune of others prompts them to unleash the most vile and abhorrent of screeds.

When torrential rains in central Texas caused the surging Guadalupe River to flood Friday morning, the swift, deadly waters washed away much of Camp Mystic, an all-girls Christian summer camp. According to reports Monday, at least 91 were killed, including 27 girls and counselors at the camp.

Jenna Bush Hager, 43, talked about the devastation on "Today."

"My mom was a counselor there, but also so many of my friends were raised at this camp," said Bush Hager.

"Texas camps are institutions, as you just heard, where many family members, generations — this camp was 100 years old — so grandmothers, mothers, kids, have all gone there."

The phrase "a parent's worst nightmare" has been used, but the horror, grief and fear among those still waiting for their daughters to be found or who have learned their children are dead is beyond words.

Prayers for those killed and missing and words of empathy have poured in.

Then there are those who exploit the pain of others for their own agendas. They lack a conscience, but they have social media accounts.

Houston pediatrician Dr. Christina B. Propst posted this under her old Facebook username, Chris Tina, according to Mediaite: "May all visitors, children, non-MAGA voters and pets be safe and dry," Probst wrote. The post went viral after a screenshot was shared by Libs of TikTok.

"Kerr County MAGA voted to gut FEMA. They deny climate change. May they get what they voted for. Bless their hearts.'

There was well-deserved backlash, lots of it. Propst deleted the post, but she couldn't delete the consequences. Blue Fish Pediatrics, her employer, announced that "the individual is no longer employed" there.

"As we previously mentioned in our original statement, we strongly condemn the comments that were made in that post. That post does not reflect the values, standards, or mission of Blue Fish Pediatrics," the company said.

Propst wasn't the only one scraping moral bottom. As searchers worked tirelessly, a former Houston mayoral appointee raged that Camp Mystic was "white-only."

"I know I'm going to get canceled for this, but Camp Mystic is a white-only girls' Christian camp. They don't even have a token Asian. They don't have a token Black person. It's an allwhite, white-only conservative Christian camp," Sade Perkins said in a video on her private TikTok account

She was appointed to the city's Food Insecurity Board by former Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner in 2023, the New York Post reported. That term was up in January — and Houston Mayor John Whitmire said Sunday that he has no plans to reappoint her, particularly after her "deeply inappropriate com-

Part of social media's appeal is the chance it offers for anyone, famous, infamous and unknown, to voice their views on current events, whether they have followers in the millions or dozens. All too often it's a megaphone for the morally bankrupt.

It's also, as Propst and Perkins are to discover, forever. Nothing really goes away on the internet, especially scandals. Their reprehensible posts and videos will always be there, thanks to screenshots, and searchable by, say, potential future employers, neighbors and friends.

We have no sympathy for

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Voters should be outraged if veto debacle prompts special session

f North Dakota taxpayers end up footing the bill for a special session over Gov. Kelly Armstrong's office's error on a visual aid that accompanied one of his veto messages, it will be because the Legislature's lawyers didn't get the office space they wanted.

Other factors might be that Armstrong shamed the lawmakers on ethics, and that Senate Majority Leader David Hogue wasn't able to shape property tax reform to his liking I've made these arguments

before, and now legislative leaders are pushing back. "Any suggestion that we or our nonpartisan staff are motivated instead by petty grievances or hidden agendas wildly misses the mark," Hogue and House Minority Leader Zac Ista wrote in a recent letter to the editor. Do you buy that?

cians and bureaucrats are incapable of petty grievances and hidden agendas?

Do you believe that politi-

If you do, I have some



oceanfront property in Cando I'd like to sell you.

Let's spare ourselves the pearl-clutching.

Legislative Council — the lawyers who claim, through absurdly complicated analyses of a simple legal question, that a special session is necessary to remedy Armstrong's veto error — attempted to use legislation to allocate the newly renovated 15th floor of the

Capitol to themselves. They did this without bothering to talk to anyone in the executive branch, or even the current occupants of that floor. "The acquisition of the newly remodeled space in Section 6 of Senate Bill 2001 was

proposed without input or con-

sultation with our administra-

tion, CTE, or anyone else from

without public discussion during the 2023-2025 interim session," Armstrong wrote in his veto message.

"My administration is more than willing to help Legislative Council accommodate its growing staff by identifying available space in the Capitol building, including space on the 15th floor," he continued.

"However, requiring the acquisition of a specific floor of the Capitol building via state law is superfluous and undermines our ongoing efforts to find ways to better utilize the Capitol building's square footage to reduce costs and save taxpayers money."

It was a ridiculously selfserving request, and Armstrong was right to use his veto authority to reject it.

When I say the legal question at hand is simple, I'm not kidding. This is not rocket science. The state constitution says this about the process for the governor issuing a veto: "The governor shall return for reconsideration any vetoed item or bill, with a written statement of the governor's

objections, to the house in which it originated."

Armstrong did that. His written statement of his objections to the vetoed bill was accurate and without error. That an accompanying visual aid had an error is only an issue for a group of vindictive lawyers working for Legislative Council, whose clients in the Legislature have their own axes to grind with Armstrong.

The Legislature shouldn't be contemplating a special session; they should be thinking about hiring new lawyers.

Supporters of Legislative Council will try to fill your head with a lot of argle-bargle about how this is a portentous question about the separation of powers, but that's pretext. A veneer painted over pettiness to make it seem more palatable to a distracted electorate that mostly isn't paying attention to this. The state constitution says what it says. All we need to do is follow it.

The lawyers have turned an inconsequential clerical error into a pretext for a vendetta. The goal is to embarrass the

governor, and it's taxpayers who will pay for it.

To be clear, Armstrong should feel some degree of embarrassment. His office really did make a mistake, but he acknowledged the error immediately, took the proper step by consulting with the attorney general on how to handle it, and then followed that advice, which was correct in concluding the error on the visual aid was a non-issue

If that wasn't a lawful or sufficient remedy for this matter, I'd be in favor of a special session, but that's simply not the case.

A special session, or even litigation, does not serve the interests of North Dakota's taxpayers. It does, unfortunately, serve the interests of the lawyer bureaucrats in Legislative Council and certain lawmakers eager to get a dig in at the governor.

And that, I'm afraid, is what's going to matter more.

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