

Mountain Views

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

—United States Constitution, Amendment One

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Commentary

Political View

Remembering Pop's love and sacrifice

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Michael Collins

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Even so, I never had any idea how bad off we were in the bad times nor how well off we were in the good times as a kid. In my memory, things seemed to stay relatively the same, and that Christmas was just as good as all of the others with plenty of presents under the tree and my mom's beloved marzipan and baklava on the celebratory table. Life didn't feel any different.

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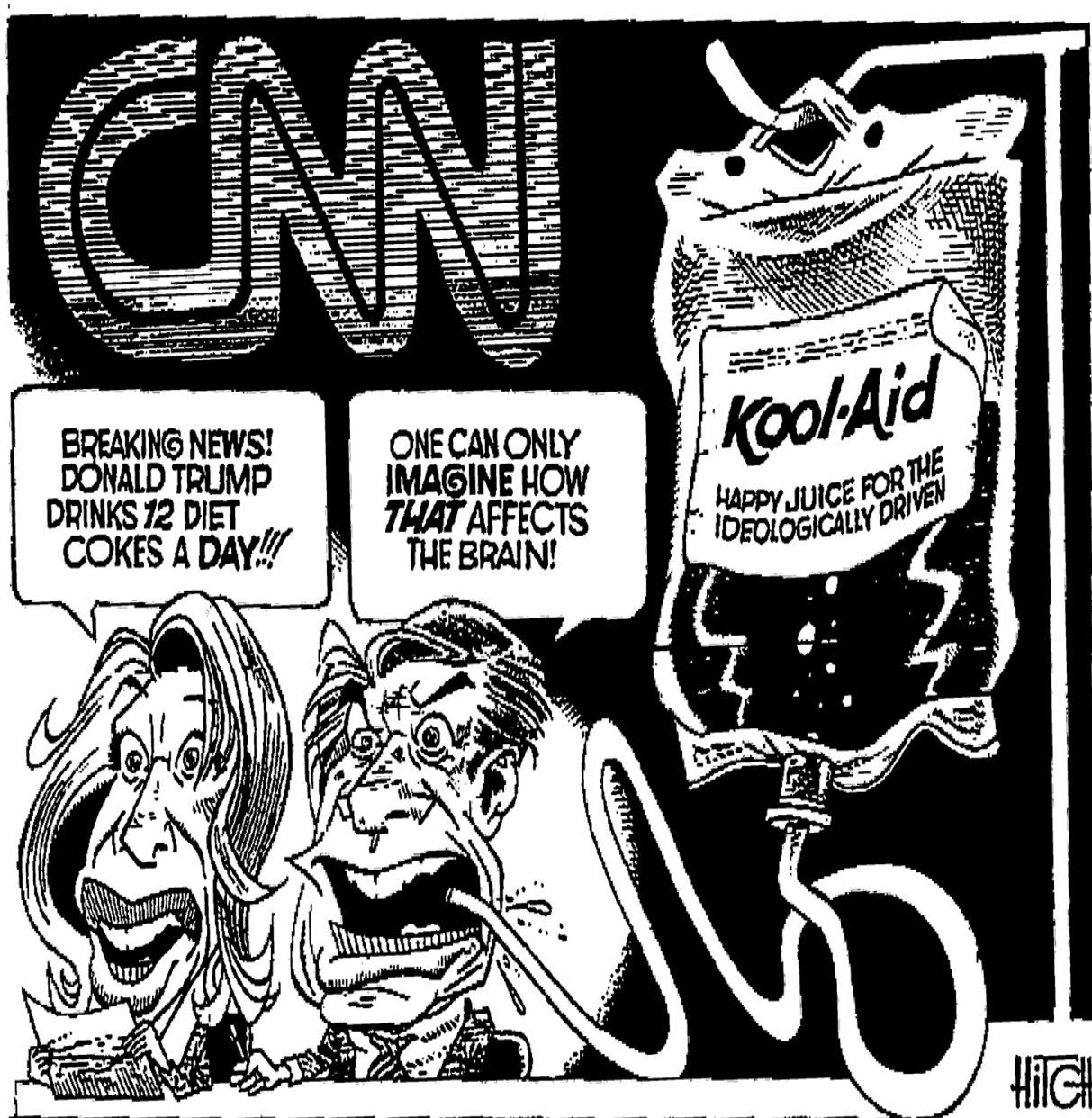
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Michael Collins can be found blogging about this and other topics at www.MichaelCollins.net.



AP checks facts on Christmas, tax cuts

BY CALVIN WOODWARD AND CHRISTOPHER RUGABER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — To hear Donald Trump talk, you'd think Barack Obama was the president who stole Christmas.

Although Trump doesn't generally single him out by name on this subject, the president's meaning is unmistakable when he declares, as he has done since long before the holiday season, that's he making it OK to talk about Christmas again. Obama, it would seem, did not. But that's not what the record shows.

A look at that matter and others that arose in a week bristling with action on taxes and Trump's words on foreign policy, politics and more:

TRUMP: "People are proud to be saying Merry Christmas again. I am proud to have led the charge against the assault of our cherished and beautiful phrase. MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!! — a tweet Christmas Eve.

THE FACTS: "Merry Christmas," the president said when presiding over the lighting of the National Christmas Tree and celebrating "the birth of our Savior."

That president was Obama, marking "my family's Christian faith" and other faiths in his final Christmas tree ritual in office, in 2016.

The White House holidays under the Obamas had plenty of Christmas trappings and cheer. Obama offered a more general holiday message on the official greeting card, but wished "Merry Christmas" at the National Tree lighting, on his Twitter account and in his weekly address.

Trump explicitly criticized Obama in 2011, tweeting that the president had "issued a statement for Kwanzaa but failed

to issue one for Christmas." In fact, that year Obama wished people "Merry Christmas" from his Twitter account and gave a video address with wife Michelle Obama in which he wished people a "Merry Christmas and happy holidays."

Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton also offered greetings marking Kwanzaa, the weeklong African heritage festivities starting Tuesday. The White House said Trump will also have a statement on Kwanzaa.

TRUMP: "The bottom line is, this is the biggest tax cuts and reform in the history of our country. This is bigger than, actually, President Reagan's many years ago." — remarks to reporters Friday.

THE FACTS: Not so, in either case. For months Trump has refused to recognize larger tax cuts in history, of which there have been many, or to grant that other presidents have enacted big tax cuts since Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. The White House won't explain how he arrives at his conclusion.

An October analysis by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget found that it would be the eighth biggest since 1918. As a percentage of the total economy, Reagan's 1981 cut is the biggest followed by the 1945 rollback of taxes that financed World War II. Trump's plan is also smaller than cuts in 1948, 1964 and 1921, and probably in other years.

DEMOCRATIC SEN. CHUCK SCHUMER: "Their bill increases taxes on lots of middle-class people. ... According to the Tax Policy Center, the top 1 percent of earners in our country gets 83

percent of the benefits." — remarks Tuesday.

THE FACTS: The tax cuts are not nearly as lopsided as many Democrats are portraying them. Almost all of the middle class would initially pay less in taxes.

For the next eight years, the vast majority of middle-class taxpayers — those earning between \$49,000 and \$86,000 — will receive a tax cut, albeit a small one. In 2018, nine-tenths of the middle class will get a cut, according to the Tax Policy Center. In 2025, 87 percent will. The tax cut won't be very big: just \$930 next year for the middle one-fifth of taxpayers, the center's analysis concludes. For those paid twice a month, that's about \$40 a paycheck.

Schumer and other Democrats who have blasted the plan as a middle-class betrayal are basing their assertions on the fact that nearly all personal tax cuts expire after 2025. That would result in a slight tax increase for about two-thirds of the middle class by 2027. The top 1 percent would still get a cut that year.

Only in 2027 do the wealthiest taxpayers get 83 percent of the benefit, as Schumer says. In 2018, roughly 21 percent of the tax cut's benefits go to the richest 1 percent, a much smaller figure, though still a disproportionate share. Just 11 percent will go to the middle one-fifth.

REP. NANCY PELOSI, House Democratic leader: "86 million middle class families get a tax hike." — tweet Wednesday.

THE FACTS: She's ignoring all the middle-class tax cuts before 2027; that year, taxes will be slightly higher for the middle class unless the cuts are extended.

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Remembering Pop's love and sacrifice
The Mountain Press 12-27-17
Michael L. Collins

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