

'Integrity' appears to be up for sale in current Congress

As perhaps the greatest homespun philosopher that this country has ever produced, the late Will Rogers once said, "I never lack material for my humor column when Congress is in session."

The profound nature of that quote is a timeless political expression that has been in full view since the most recent version of Congress convened for business earlier this month.

Or as Rogers would later surmise: "Politics is the best show in America. I love animals and I love politicians and I love to watch both of 'em play, either back home in their native state or after they have been captured and sent to the zoo or to Washington."

Congress, in all of its self-absorbed glory, has been an inviting target for the next generation of American humorists, who have taken turns on late night TV harpooning those who make laws for a living. For current comedians, it's like shooting fish in a barrel, although we all risk getting caught in the crossfire.

The bloody result figures to be just another stain on the soul of a nation that is still wounded from what occurred at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 when a few hours of mob rule threatened to undo nearly two-and-a-half centuries of the rule of law.

The blame for the January 6 insurrection rests principally on the shoulders of a disgraced former president, whose utterly regrettable four-year reign in Washington would never have happened if the qualities of character and competence counted for

much of anything in modern day America.

In short, what Congress needs to ask itself is whether the concept of "integrity" comes with a price tag when conducting the nation's business in the hallowed halls of the Capitol.

First, we should ask New York Congressman George Santos, who recently took office despite admitting that he is nothing more than a fictional character who lied about his education, religion, employment, and assorted other sordid details that appeared on his bogus election resume.

Next, we can ask those congressional leaders who are enabling Santos by overlooking his fraudulent behavior simply because he is a "vote" that they will have in their pockets for the next two years unless law enforcement authorities come calling on him with a pair of handcuffs.

The fact that someone like Santos – or recent senatorial candidate Herschel Walker – could come anywhere near elective office is an indictment of our current political system, which apparently places little value on such time-honored character traits as honesty, integrity, and civility.

Those three qualities are at the backbone of the legal profession, where members must display their intelligence by successfully completing three years of law school before passing the rigorous bar exam and the corresponding character and fitness test. The three-pronged standard purposely sets a high bar for those entering the profession,



ensuring a certain level of competency for lawyers as they embark upon their careers.

Safeguarding the importance of the legal profession in society served as one of the principal reasons behind the founding of Primerus™ in 1992. The law is where our moral compass can be found, pointing in the direction of "true north" in all matters of conscience and courage.

It was with those guideposts in mind 31 years ago that we began a movement to protect and uplift the legal profession, creating what would become an international alliance of some of the finest law firms in the world, each committed to maintaining the highest ethical and moral standards.

Success in that regard has inspired us to take the next step in the evolution of Primerus™, this time in the form of a foundation designed to elevate the standards of the public service profession, most notably in Congress where certain members cavort with white supremacists and other extremists who advocate political violence.

To help build the new Primerus™ Foundation, we intend to borrow a page from its namesake, utilizing all of

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our creative marketing and messaging energies to underscore the importance of having the best and the brightest women and men in elective office.

That, in a nutshell, is our mission, which we, as lawyers, have a preordained duty to carry out for the good of society. Otherwise, we will face the prospect of staring into a political abyss of our own making.

Best regards,

Jack Buchanan, President