

THREE THINGS: MIT HANDELSBLATTHER

Let's get some more pressing business out of the way and then we'll get down to this alleged subpoena.

~ 3 ~

Calls – make them. We should all simply get used to making calls or sending faxes to our members Congress and other government officials on a regular basis. Our democracy has now shown us the error of believing in the vote alone; voting is the very minimum democracy requires. We simply have to do more.

Today we need to do more to protect Net Neutrality. We have less than two weeks to make an impression on the Federal Communications Commission, leaving them with no doubt the public wants Net Neutrality.

Contact the FCC – need a script? See @Celeste_pewter.

Contact your Senators – need a script for that too? Here you go.

The odds may not be in our favor given the intransigence of FCC chair Ajit Pai and two of the commissioners, but we can't curl up and give in.

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NBC's Today Show won morning ratings after firing accused sexual harasser and abuser Matt Lauer this past week. Good fucking riddance to bad baggage.

NBC's "Today" wins in the ratings for the first time in three months on the week of Matt Lauer's firing on sexual misconduct charges.

<https://t.co/Dav24K9ncQ>

– The Associated Press (@AP) December 5, 2017

Ah, but NBC only terminated him because Lauer represented a threat to the corporation's bottom line. They really don't give a flying fig about women, proved with their donations.

No corporation that gives a campaign donation to pedophile and political hack Roy Moore really cares about women. NBC and its parent corporation Comcast care far more about ending Net Neutrality and being on the prospective GOP senator's good side. What flexible ethics – get rid of an abuser because he violates policy then donate money to another abuser.

Polling shows the race between pedophile Roy Moore and Democratic Party candidate Doug Jones is far too tight to feel comfortable. It's within margin of error which is too easily gamed by voter suppression or other tactics. But I hope Jones kicks Moore's ass on election day.

Sen. Jeff Flake kicked in a \$100 donation to Jones, writing "Country above party" on the description line. It's chump change but he'll take some crap from the GOP over this now that the RNC has lost whatever remained of its spine and returned to financing their pedo candidate.

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Now for Handelsblathering –

The first report I read Tuesday morning was by Bloomberg, which offered very little detail about the subpoena allegedly served on Deutsche Bank. Where was the subpoena served? The article didn't say; it only said,

Mueller issued a subpoena to Germany's largest lender several weeks ago, forcing the bank to submit documents on its relationship with Trump and his family, according to a person briefed on the matter, who asked not to be identified because the action has not been announced.

Caveat: Bloomberg has a nasty habit of updating their articles without leaving adequate evidence

of the changes made. The graf excerpted above may not be exactly the same as the one I read on Tuesday morning.

We'll assume service was made on Deutsche Bank in Berlin. When was the subpoena served? "Several weeks ago" the article said, which is horribly non-specific. I would personally guess this was less than a month ago or the journalists would have said "more than a month" or offer some other framing to extend the time beyond a month. "Several weeks ago" might fit the period of roughly 20 weeks since Trump was asked about special prosecutor Robert Mueller looking into his family's finance's (July 9) – but that's a big stretch at nearly five months.

What niggled at me was the sourcing of Bloomberg's piece – it relied almost wholly on German financial news outlet Handelsblatt. Its editor Daniel Schaefer referred to the story as "our scoop" on Twitter. Every report after Handelsblatt's relied on the same story – or at least it isn't clear in much later stories whether secondary news outlets called Deutsche Bank in Berlin and confirmed there was a subpoena served on them, or if they contacted Handelsblatt to confirm what their source had told them.

The sourcing looked too damned thin.

It didn't help matters that the article is partially behind a paywall and in English at their global site and in German at their domestic site; nor did it help that the German language article is difficult to find.

Looking at Handelsblatt's article on the global site, the wording seems odd; it might be due to differences between German and English but this first graf doesn't seem like it.

Deutsche Bank has been served. US investigators are demanding that it provide information on dealings linked to the Trumps, sources familiar with the matter told Handelsblatt. The subpoena is part of a probe by special counsel

Robert Mueller and his team to determine whether the president's campaign was involved in Russian efforts to influence the US election.

"...[Has] been served. When have you last seen a statement as bald as this yet as unclear? 'Served' what – pie? The word 'subpoena' appears in the third sentence, and even at that point its use is odd. "...[part] of a probe" suggests there has been more going on in Berlin than just the handing over of documents on request.

And then Trump's lawyer Jay Sekulow came out later in the day and denied there had been any subpoena served.

Reporters contacted Handelsblatt but by then it was well after business hours in Germany.

A reader at TalkingPointsMemo speculates that Deutsche Bank may not have been able to disclose any subpoena to Trump or his lawyer if a grand jury orders them not to do so, and that Sekulow may not have been told there was a subpoena for this reason.

I don't know; do German banks follow U.S. grand jury instructions to the letter? Maybe this one does since it has been in trouble with the U.S. for money laundering and it wants to improve its credibility while reducing its exposure.

I have another theory, though, thanks to researching the Volkswagen dieselgate scandal. VW's executives used some weaselly language to imply they were not involved in decision making; the language used relied on American's limited grasp of German and the ways in German could be manipulated to misrepresent the truth.

What I want to know is whether Germans use the word "subpoena" in the same way we do, or if they rely on either an EU legal term, or a German word equivalent. In other words, if someone asked the bank if a subpoena had been served, they may say no – but if they were asked if document production had been ordered

(*Dokumentenproduktion*, perhaps?), they might say something very different.

This entire story seems off kilter, as if it were intended for a very narrow audience. Why did the Deutsche Bank leaker talk with Handelsblatt, the fourth largest Germany daily subscription newspaper and the biggest business news paper, versus a Sun-like tabloid Bild or the weekly Der Spiegel? Why was there a specific indication that both Melania and Ivanka as well as Jared Kushner had accounts with Deutsche Bank?

Something isn't quite right. But then nothing's been quite right since January 21.

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That's a wrap. Treat this like an open thread.