

Make Me Smart October 11, 2021 transcript

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Molly Wood: Oh my god, you're so right, so now it's like, how much sugar can we cram into beer?

Kai Ryssdal: Exactly. Sometimes it just hits right, sometimes the moment just comes to us.

Molly Wood: That's perfect. Couldn't be better.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, my goodness. Hey everybody, I'm Kai Ryssdal. Welcome back to Make Me Smart, nothing much changes here, making today make sense.

Molly Wood: That's right. I'm Molly Wood. Thanks for joining us, it is Monday, also known as what did we miss Monday where we're gonna just do a quick run through, maybe not that quick. I mean, I say quick, but I don't know what's gonna happen because there's a lot of links in today's rundown. Yeah, lots of stuff. Yep. A lot of mine are all the same story. I think I agree with you that your first link is really the story of America right now, by the way.

Kai Ryssdal: I think it kind of is. And I think it kind of hit me this weekend. So, so my first link is a political article, article from this weekend. The headline of which is "Trump holds fast to his election lies as the GOP establishment hugs him tighter." So the president, former president, went out to Iowa this weekend, did a rally. Iowa, of course, first line in the primaries and caucuses and all that jazz. It's the bellwether, blah, blah, blah. And up there on stage with him was 86, I believe he is, year-old Senator Chuck Grassley, who's been in office from Iowa since like, god was a boy. Whoops, hang on. There goes the leaf blower, which gets into my, one of my other stories.

Molly Wood: It's amazing! It's like you planned it.

Kai Ryssdal: It kind of does.

Molly Wood: He's like 88, Chuck Grassley.

Kai Ryssdal: Is he 88? Okay. I will believe however old you tell me he is. But he was up there on stage, accepting the endorsement of the former president for a race that Chuck Grassley is going to win hands down. I'm going to just try to talk through it because it should be gone in like 10 seconds, I promise. It's fading. Alright. Anyway, so, so the reason that caught me was two

reasons. Number one, I think that the, the premise of this headline is exactly right. The GOP establishment is wrapping its arms around Donald Trump, right. And this became crystal clear to me this weekend. I mean, we've known it's coming. It's been kind of abstract, but now it's kind of real. And number two, until the democrats took Congress, Chuck Grassley was third in line for the presidency. Right? It goes the Vice President, Speaker of the House and the Senate, President Pro Tem, which was Chuck Grassley, when the republicans were in charge, and holy cow, holy cow. And all the talk about soft coup, and it's coming back and all that jazz. It just, I've, I've known it, and I've seen it. And this weekend, it just kind of crystallized for me and I just, it makes me despair a little bit.

Molly Wood: Yeah, there is polling out. I'm looking up the Bulwark newsletter that I get, there is polling out that says, you know, obviously, Joe Biden has been, President Biden has been going through a dip in the polls. And this newsletter points out, though, that the really bad part of the current dip is that none of them despite literally, you know, most of this party now, there were some sort of brief condemnations after January 6, but now we saw, you know, Steve Scalise, Representative Steve Scalise, this weekend saying, refusing to say that President Biden won the election, but according to at least this polling, people aren't, don't blame republicans for what is currently happening in the United States, right. So they just don't, it's not, it's, the information wall is so complete, and, to be fair, right, like the democrats are a hot mess somewhat as usual, and it's, it is not, but it's not that encouraging when you look at what is coming our way. You know, it's not that encouraging when you look at the idea that, that a permanent and, and firmly entrenched minority rule is the plan. And, and that, yes, the bulk of this party is on board with the plan.

Kai Ryssdal: And I can't decide. Sorry, we're getting a little off topic here. And this is probably better for Friday. And a beer, I can't decide what I want to do about it. You know?

Molly Wood: Yeah. I mean, I don't know, I've been, like you read a lot of history. I read a lot of history, like at some point, it's, it's hard to say it as a journalist, because we're journalists. And we feel that we should have an impact in the world, that our reporting should lead to outcomes, and that we've seen all of this reporting that showed, you know, corruption and neglect and bad behavior and failure to protect Americans, 700,000 of whom have now died of a disease, and maybe up to 600,000 of those deaths might have been preventable, we don't know. But we do know that a lot of it was preventable, and it's not getting through. So like, right, if we're losing the information war, I guess we can keep trying? Right, it takes work. Okay. This is a huge tangent, but I'm just going here. I was thinking about Andrew Yang this weekend. And because I saw some tweet about he, I think he went on the Tucker Carlson show and got yelled at about it. And then he was tweeting about how, like, we have to put aside our differences and come together, and he's like, a third party guy now. And I was like, you know, I feel, I have questions, because I feel like anybody who ends up as a third party candidate is often like, we find out that they're backed by somebody else, or, you know, like, there's some reason, and I, and I was like, Wait, isn't Andrew Yang the tech guy? Because if that's true, then he more than anybody should understand network effects, which is like, third parties and alternative social networks to Facebook are never going to work because nobody's there. Nobody's on them, right? And then I

looked up his Wikipedia entry, because I was like, what is the deal with, is he really like a tech guy? And shouldn't he understand the network effects are the key and you should make this chain, like change from within, and, you know, a party with no numbers is doomed to lose. And I found a portrait of a person who's like, really bounced around a lot, right? Who had this sort of leg up in his life because of brilliant freakin parents who sent him to great schools. And then, and then you really see this resume that's like, and then he did this, and that, and then he sort of, and then a lot of times, like a friend brought him in on their thing. And then he took over that thing. And I came away. And I was thinking about this, and also American politics that like, my perception was this is a guy who doesn't want to do the work. Like, this is a guy who wanted to show up, win the presidency, make a big change, didn't, so then he was like, well, I'm just gonna go this other way. I'm okay, I'm gonna start this third party. Whereas like, you hear someone like Stacey Abrams, talk about--

Kai Ryssdal: Who has done the work, holy cow.

Molly Wood: Literal of work that it takes. So are we a country who does the work? Or are we, you know, like the big bad this and that.

Kai Ryssdal: That was a long windup to a really insightful point. A really insightful point. Yeah.

Molly Wood: Thanks. I'm glad I got there eventually.

Kai Ryssdal: You did, I was wondering. So look, I'm not sure we do the work anymore. I mean, I think day in and day out millions of people in this country do, but I think as a whole, I don't know.

Molly Wood: Or do we think that, I mean, certainly we there are huge issues there. In fact, another thing I was reading today was that there's a poll that just came out, I think it's Pew, that talks about Americans confidence, who they trust, and it was like, the very slim majority of Americans trust America, if that makes sense. They trust the American people, to, by and large, make the right decisions. But then there's a huge gap when you get to how much they trust Congress. So Americans trust other Americans, but they trust the institutions of government, like at 30% or 20%. And it shows you that there is this big disconnect between our elected representatives who, you know, in some cases may represent the districts that they came from, but in other cases may represent the companies who gave them the most money or the super gerrymandered specific special interest districts that put them there. Yeah, so it just takes more work. I mean, honestly, all we do is keep working. Love, Grandma Pat. More work, black coffee, let's get it done.

Kai Ryssdal: So you know, like, look, it's called the American experiment for a reason, right? It is, it is, nothing is preordained. It is experimental every single day. And, and in the larger context, experiments fail, and so do the work.

Molly Wood: All right, that there's no like and return. Yeah. Oh, thanks, man. Appreciate it.

Kai Ryssdal: Okay, what else. I'll do a couple of quickies. So governor Gavin Newsom in California this weekend signed a law that's going to outlaw gas powered lawn mowers and leaf blowers, which just interrupted the first three minutes of this podcast. And that's kind of amazing. It's kind of amazing. Not only are they loud and noisy and whatever, but also they're dirty, dirty, dirty. And that's just a huge plus. That's just a huge plus, you know.

Molly Wood: I didn't know they were so dirty.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, they are, they're horribly dirty, those two stroke engines. And then my final item, which kind of leads into your first item. Frances Haugen, the whistleblower for Facebook, is going to have a meeting with the Facebook oversight board, which would be really interesting because, really? Oversight Board, how much good are we actually doing anyway?

Molly Wood: Yeah but her tweet was like, fire. Facebook has lied to the board repeatedly, she wrote, and I am looking for, looking forward to sharing the truth with them. Wow. Yeah. Yeah. So I don't know what they can do. But I guess we're about to find out. Yeah, that is an entree into my four links, which sounds like it's gonna go for another 20 minutes. But it's really not because they are all basically the same story and they're stories about employees making noise. And it's so interesting, because we're in this moment of like, the great resignation. And all of these employees were like, wow, baby work kind of sucks. Like maybe we've been treated like crap this whole time. I don't know, or they're just ready to do something different. But you have Frances Haugen coming out and then Facebook all of a sudden, I mean, making the rounds on Meet the Press. And the Sunday politics shows being like, it's okay. We're gonna limit politics. We're gonna boost friends, like they may not be apologizing, but they are making changes in response.

Kai Ryssdal: No, sorry, wait, backup. It was, it was, it was Nick Clegg making the rounds on the Sunday shows. Who's the spokesman for Facebook.

Molly Wood: I think I meant for Facebook, Facebook writ large. But yes, Nick Clegg, their spokesman. There's a fascinating story in Business Insider about Apple's troubles in the healthcare space, which we talked about, like that's a hard thing to crack. But that the, the kind of overriding issue is that Apple doesn't seem to want to take two things. One, Apple doesn't seem to want to take any criticism at all, and seems to boot everyone who criticizes it internally. Two, there are issue, issues with, potentially with data integrity, and three, they really just want their health stuff to sell watches. But the interesting part to me is that you have a company that isn't willing to hear internal feedback. And in fact, it really cracks down hard and always has on employees who say negative things or raise issues. But now you have employees speaking out about it loudly on Twitter, like this Ashley M. Lovick person who had been fired about a month ago. Because she was like, hey, we're on a super fun toxic waste dump but I'm worried about it and then like got this call from a guy who specializes in interrogation according to LinkedIn and then got fired. Yeah. And I think that we're just finding that companies that are choosing to be this inflexible are facing some backlash. And it is on that note that I say that Netflix, which you

know, aired another Dave Chappelle special in which he said totally transphobic things, full stop. Like I don't, don't come at me with your Dave Chappelle is just making jokes. They were transphobic, period. A Netflix employee tweeted about it, like this is transphobic and we don't like it. And Netflix suspended the employee, ostensibly because that person and another employee tried to come to a meeting that was above their pay grade. But I'm pretty sure we can guess it's actually because of the tweet. Yeah, I mean, A, you fire people that are trying to come to meetings that are above your paygrade? Wow.

Kai Ryssdal: That's tough, man. Wow, harsh.

Molly Wood: And then B, someone tweets like, wow, that was a really crappy thing that we aired on our network and then they get fired. I mean, it gets like, it's this weird push and pull where employees are feeling their oats, and they're flexing their power. And companies are trying to figure out how to deal and a lot of them are trying, a lot of them are breaking, not bending.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, it's funny because the right thing is the easier path but for some reason, the companies don't see this. And they let money get in the way. Anyway, yep. We'll get out the way. Super quick.

Molly Wood: We got a couple of them. We're twins! Oh, god, we've merged, we're the same person.

Kai Ryssdal: Alright, I'll go first real quick. So they are both external to Ms. Wood and myself. The first is from Marissa Cabrera, our producer, flagging the President's proclamation about indigenous peoples day today. Also, I just want to point out a tweet by the brand, the brand newest reporter at Marketplace who is of native descent, right? She's Native American. She's Fallen forest from Albuquerque and pointed out today, there are very few Native American reporters in public radio, possibly she's the first staff reporter. And she's here to help, is what her message was. And I thought we should just amplify that. That's all.

Molly Wood: Yes. That's so funny. I retweeted that just before the show. And she actually pointed out it should not have taken that long, and I said I'm really grateful that we're the spot that Savannah landed. She helped us a lot actually prepare for the ICWA Indian Child Welfare Act episode that we did last week. Yep, yep. And then a listener. I love this and this is my old stomping grounds and I definitely think we need to go on a road trip. A listener, Alice in Arlington, Virginia shared a piece in The Washington Post about llama trekking in Yellowstone National Park. Yes, please. I would like to do this. I want to go to the llamas in Yellowstone.

Kai Ryssdal: It reminds me of your, your, your like goat yoga zooms or whatever it was early in this pandemic, you were totally about, about this goat, goat yoga, whatever they were.

Molly Wood: Backpacking with llamas, I'm going, you just wait. Mark my words. Alright, that's it. That's all we got. Okay, that is it for today. Tomorrow I'm excited we finally, thanks for your

patience everyone, get to talk about batteries. Specifically what batteries mean for long term energy storage and our energy transition because I don't know if you've heard, totally not going to survive climate change if we don't make some major changes to how we collect and distribute energy and power and it may involve some really big batteries. So subscribe to make me smart in your favorite podcast app and then it will just pop up tomorrow morning. We'll be right there for you.

Kai Ryssdal: It's like magic, send us your questions as well comments on this or anything else you hear us talking about. Plus your making me smile suggestions, please. You can reach us at makemesmart@marketplace.org, or you just call us. Leave us a voice message at our phone number. I'm sorry, I was thinking about that audio thing we've got on the website today. You can just click on that button and attach an audio file. But anyway, our phone number is 508-827-6278, 508-UB-SMART. Dial us up, leave us a message.

Molly Wood: And yeah, makemesmart.org you can like, send us a little email and attach an audio thing. I've never done that on the internet. Make me smart is produced and directed by Marissa Cabrera with help from the absolutely delightful Marque Greene. Today's program was engineered by Charlton Thorpe, he of the impeccable timing. Tony Wagner writes our newsletters.

Kai Ryssdal: Bridget Bodnar is the Senior Producer of this podcast. The director of on demand, and now officially in charge, oh my goodness, is Donna Tam.

Molly Wood: Oh my goodness. You remember her when she was just our beloved junior producer. We knew her when.

Kai Ryssdal: She's been kicked upstairs.

Molly Wood: She's in charge. PS, thank goodness.