



Pence's place in Trump's orbit



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The comparison sounded highly contrived and painfully awkward. But Vice President **Mike Pence** always seems ready to do his job jamming rhetorical square pegs into round holes in the service of President **Donald Trump**.

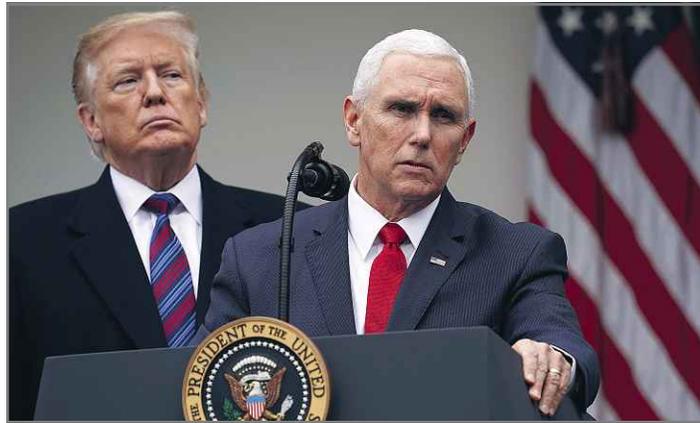
Honoring the late Rev. **Martin Luther King Jr.** last week, Pence said: "You think of how he changed America. He inspired us to change through the legislative process, to become a more perfect union."

"That's exactly what President Trump is calling on Congress to do — come to the table in the spirit of good faith," Pence said.

Pence is an important figure right now — and not merely because he would instantly ascend to the top if Trump's tenure suddenly meets an unlikely end. Pence is widely seen as a key link between an often chaotic White House and ardent Republicans and conservatives. He's seasoned in the legislature, and sidesteps much of the controversy in which his boss indulges.

In November, reports surfaced from the White House that Trump was asking others about Pence's loyalty, whether he should be on the 2020 ticket. Whatever answers came back, Pence appears on track to stay as vice president and presumably run later for the top spot in the event his mentor is re-elected.

These days the former Indiana governor plays an influen-



Vice President Mike Pence speaks as President Donald Trump listens.

tial role in the administration's support for Venezuela opposition leader **Juan Guaidó**, who seeks to supplant the nation's besieged and failing president **Nicolas Maduro**.

Pence emerges in the news not only as a Trump factotum.

The recent decision by his wife, Karen, to teach at a Virginia private school that has a policy of rejecting homosexual and transgender students and staff caused the expected stir. The vice president called the fallout "deeply offensive."

"My wife and I have been in the public eye for quite a while. We're used to the criticism," Pence told EWTN, a television network that airs Catholic-themed programming. "But I have to tell you, to see major news organizations attacking Christian education is deeply offensive to us."

He didn't cite a specific news outlet, but LGBTQ groups were quoted by several publications as criticizing **Karen Pence**. The Huffington Post quoted **JoDee Winterhof**, senior vice president for policy and political affairs at the Human Rights Cam-

paign, saying, "Why not teach at a school that welcomes everyone, instead of choosing one that won't serve LGBTQ kids, kids of LGBTQ parents?"

Before Trump caved on his federal shutdown last week, Pence also carried out the awkward duty of projecting Trump's position on a border wall.

On Fox News, Pence called it "disappointing to see [House] Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** reject [a compromise] offer before the president gave his speech."

When host **Chris Wallace** said Democrats won't accept the Trump package, Pence said: "I'm not sure that's true, Chris . . . We've had a lot of dialogue . . . As the president often says, we'll see."

We saw. The Democrats rejected the measure and it failed. But since the shutdown has ended, Pence's exchange with Wallace becomes moot.

Some day, we may see how much a Pence term would resemble a Trump term. From this distance, at this moment, their differences in style and emphasis seem stark.

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SPINCYCLE

GUIDE TO POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

Turnout key to sewer loss

Turnout was the key Tuesday in the defeat of a sewer expansion referendum in Great River, where 48.8 percent of eligible voters came to the polls, according to unofficial results.

Two other sewer referendums, in Mastic and Babylon, won approval but attracted a much smaller turnout. Turnout in Mastic was 15.1 percent and 13.1 percent in Babylon, according to unofficial results.

Mastic and Babylon voters approved two sewer projects that will cover 6,500 homes, Suffolk

County's largest sewer expansion since the 1970s.

Residents will have to pay an estimated annual sewer tax of about \$470 and \$532 for the Mastic and Babylon projects, respectively. It would have been \$755 annually for the Great River project.

Peter Scully, a deputy county executive under Suffolk County Executive **Steve Bellone**, said last week the county would consider alternate ways to use the \$26.4 million proposed for the Great River project.

— Rick Brand

Ex-judge seeks traffic gig

Former Suffolk County Court Judge **Jeffrey Arlen Spinner** has been certified as a judicial hearing officer, and has applied to work for Suffolk Traffic and Parking Violation Agency.

Spinner was one of 13 people Suffolk Administrative Judge **C. Randall Hinrichs** designated as qualified to conduct trials under vehicle and traffic laws. All on the list have at least two years experience handling traffic work and are either current or past village or town justices or former judges.

Paul Margiotta, agency executive director, said Spinner of Setauket has not been hired, but he is willing to interview him for the \$300-per-diem job. Margiotta said he was unaware of details that led to Spinner's transfer near the end of his judicial term.

Spinner, a Conservative Party member, left office at the end of last year and did not seek nomination for reelection. His former brother-in-law is **Kenneth Auerbach**, a party dissident who waged losing battles in the last two years to become Suffolk Conservative chairman.

Shortly before he stepped down as a judge last year, Spinner's daughter, **Sydney Marquez**, was sentenced to drug treatment in prison for giving



Jeffrey Arlen Spinner

a marijuana-laced brownie to her 4-year-old son.

At the time of her arrest, Marquez and the boy lived in Port Jefferson with Spinner, who had custody of the child.

As a result of the arrest, Child Protective Services removed the boy from Spinner's custody.

Spinner was reassigned from Family Court, where he was sitting, "to avoid the appearance of impropriety," a Hinrichs spokeswoman said. Family Court court often deals with CPS, and Spinner ruled on child custody and related issues.

Marquez's son is in the custody of another relative.

— Rick Brand

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The 1600 is Newsday's daily inside look at the Trump presidency

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